

Libya agrees to Lockerbie trial

CAIRO (AFP) — Libya has agreed to hand over the two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a U.S. airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, for trial by a panel chaired by a judge named by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the spokesman for the families of the British victims said Wednesday. Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi gave his personal agreement that the suspects could be tried by a panel of five judges chaired by a senior Scottish judge appointed by Mr. Blair, Jim Swire told AFP here on his return from a visit to Libya. "We also suggested that the other four judges be nominated by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan," said Mr. Swire, who lost his daughter in the 1988 bombing in which 270 people were killed. But Libyan officials said they would "have to think about such a suggestion," he said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورديان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية (الراي)

Volume 23 Number 6817

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, APRIL 23-24 1998, DHUL HILJA 25-26, 1418

Price: Jordan 200 fils

Arab states sign first ever anti-terrorism agreement

'Liberation, self-determination do not amount to terrorism'

CAIRO (AP) — Arab countries on Wednesday signed the first regional pact on fighting terrorism, but made it clear that activists who target Israel will not be considered terrorists. The pact calls on Arab countries to deny refuge, training and financial or military support to groups that launch attacks on other Arab nations. They will also exchange information on terrorist groups. Member nations "should not allow their lands to be used as theatres for plotting or the execution and organisation of terrorist crimes," the treaty says. It was signed by interior or justice ministers of the 22 countries in the Arab League, which sponsored the pact. An official statement said the pact will help the Arab World "direct its energies" toward economic development.

"The agreement (will) save the evil attempts to defame the image of the Arabs and Islam... We will not allow (terrorism) to impose its terrorism and oppression," Egypt's Interior Minister Habib Al Adly said.

"Terrorism completely vio-

lates Islam, which holds in great regard the human life while terrorism treats it cheaply," said Saudi Arabia's Interior Minister Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz.

In accepting a Lebanese proposal, the pact exempts resistance movements from its definition, saying activist acts aimed at "liberation and self-determination" do not amount to terrorism. That clause is intended to justify attacks on Israel by Palestinians, and by Lebanese guerrilla groups fighting to oust Israeli soldiers from a swath of land they occupy in southern Lebanon.

A report released earlier this week by a committee of ministers that worked on the pact called Israel a state "established on terrorism," a reference to claims that Israel was founded on stolen Arab land.

The signing ceremony for the pact took place at the Arab League building, which was ringed by armed policemen. Security men also blocked small streets nearby and were perched on the roof. Everyone inside, including journalists and delegates, was escorted by

plainclothesmen. The strict security was a reminder that the threat of terrorism remains as real in Egypt as in some other Arab countries, such as Algeria.

Both countries, which have battled Islamist movements for years, had lobbied for the pan-Arab anti-terrorist agreement for the past two years. While guerrilla massacres in Algeria are well known, the world was reminded of Egypt's plight when suspected Islamist guerrillas gunned down 58 foreigners and two Egyptians on Nov. 17 outside the tourist town of Luxor. Islamist groups have been fighting since 1992 to oust Egypt's secular government.

The treaty says any attacks on ruling regimes in the Arab World or the families of the rulers should be treated as terrorist and not political acts. This clause is apparently aimed at preventing attackers from escaping extradition or prosecution by claiming they were politically motivated.

The agreement outlines plans for cooperation in the investigation and arrest of suspected extremists and estab-



Members of the Arab League attend the signing ceremony of the first Arab convention against terrorism on Wednesday in Cairo. The Egyptian inspired treaty, which took four years to bring about bars act of terrorism against the convention's signatories (AFP photo)

lishes guidelines for their extradition.

It was not clear what the treaty says about countries that violate it.

"I believe that the agreement... has dealt with clearly the differentiation between ter-

rorist and political crimes and armed struggle," Mr. Adly said.

Arab League General Secretary Esmet Abdul Meguid said the agreement will help increase Arab cooperation with Western governments.

Prince Hassan renews call for Islamic-Christian dialogue

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan underlined Wednesday the importance of Islamic-Christian dialogue in the course of portraying the bright image of the Islamic faith to the world and to project Islam's stand with regard to the different humanitarian issues and thwart attempts by some people to distort the image of Islam.

Speaking at a lunch banquet he hosted at the Royal Court in honour of members of the Higher Islamic Council for Da'wa and Relief, Prince Hassan said that through dialogue one can attain cooperation among different nations in political, cultural and economic fields.

He told the council members who met in Amman at the invitation of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research (Al al Bayt Foundation) that it was important for Islamic institutions to coordinate their efforts in promoting dialogue and achieving their objectives.

He reminded his audience of

Islam's view of dialogue as a means for persuasion, stressing the importance of the Islamic World to contribute to the creation of a new humanitarian order that can ensure security and a decent life for all people.

The required dialogue among religions, he said, "is one in which we do not lose our identity and one that leads to openness towards world societies and so we can be of benefit to others as they will be of benefit to us."

"In fact, we have to take the initiative in asking for dialogue because we do not fear a dialogue and we have full confidence in our stance and our capabilities," added Prince Hassan.

Prince Hassan went on to say that dialogue was needed as a tool to help protect Islamic minorities in Western societies with whom he said the Islamic World should maintain contact.

He expressed hope that closer cooperation between Islamic and Christian institutions would help people confront

many challenges.

The Crown Prince recalled that in the Tehran Islamic summit conference he had called for the establishment of an Islamic centre to settle disputes and in this respect he also renewed his call for the creation of an international Zakat fund which would help solve many humanitarian issues facing the Islamic nations.

Following the meeting Dr. Abdul Aziz Twejiri, director general of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), told Jordan Television that the meeting aimed at co-ordination in the Islamic-Christian dialogue and uniting the stands of the different Islamic institutions taking part in such dialogue.

The council comprises twelve members of whom two are from Jordan. They are Dr. Abdul Salam Abadi, minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and Mr. Kamel Sharif, secretary general of the World Islamic Council for Da'wa and Relief.

Egyptian-Palestinian talks focus on stalled Mideast negotiations

CAIRO (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met Wednesday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Wednesday and discussed the U.S. efforts to nudge forward stalled Middle East peace negotiations.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa outlined the talks to reporters after the session and said the two leaders agreed to meet again following May 4 negotiations in London between Israel and

the Palestinians.

Mr. Musa said Mr. Arafat was going to the London meeting in agreement with an American plan for Israel to withdraw from a further 13.1 per cent of the West Bank over 12 weeks in exchange for new Palestinian security guarantees.

"The Palestinian side has accepted the American initiative... but the problem lies with the Israeli government," Mr. Moussa said.

Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Netanyahu are also expected to meet next Tuesday in Cairo, and Mr. Musa said those discussions would focus on "what is going in the Middle East peace and the dangers that threaten its collapse." Mr. Mubarak, who has long tried to mediate between the Israelis and Palestinians, has repeatedly warned the entire peace process could fall apart unless Israel is willing to compromise.

Netanyahu ministers hold new debate on troop pullback

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet held a new debate Wednesday over how much additional West Bank land Israel would be willing to cede to revive U.S.-brokered peace talks with the Palestinians, officials said.

After the meeting, Mr. Netanyahu held talks on the pullback with his "kitchen" cabinet including Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon and Trade Minister Nathan Shtroum.

Mr. Netanyahu is reportedly trying to convince ministers to accept a slight increase in Israel's offer for the long-overdue troop withdrawal ahead of top-level talks among U.S., Israeli and Palestinian officials in London on May 4.

U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross and Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk are due

in Israel Saturday to try to obtain Israeli and Palestinian agreement on a package peace deal to be finalised in London. The U.S. proposal is reportedly centred on a staged Israeli withdrawal from an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank in tandem with Palestinian measures against anti-Israeli activists.

The U.S. plan would have the two sides then enter into negotiations on a final peace agreement.

Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing coalition government has so far offered to cede only nine per cent of the West Bank at this time. But Israeli press reports said he is trying to convince hard-liners to increase this to 11 per cent.

The Palestinian National Authority says that interim peace accords require Israel to withdraw from 30 per cent of the West Bank now and another 30 per cent in mid-year. The Palestinians currently have full or partial control of 27 per cent of the territory

and most of the Gaza Strip.

But Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Monday that he accepted the U.S. compromise proposal in principle and called on Mr. Ross to make the U.S. ideas public during his next mission.

New impetus has been injected into the peace effort since British Prime Minister Tony Blair met with Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat early this week and obtained their agreement to the London talks.

The current plan is for Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat to meet separately with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Mr. Blair in the British capital.

If the two sides can agree on the U.S. peace proposals, a Netanyahu-Arafat summit could be held, although all sides have been playing down expectations of a major breakthrough after more than a year of stalemate in the negotiations.

As part of a flurry of diplo-

PNA warns of explosion

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians called on the United States Wednesday to pressure Israel to accept U.S. proposals during upcoming talks in London, warning that the zero hour in the peace process was approaching. "The situation is very dangerous right now. We are close to the last 15 minutes before either the situation explodes or the picture becomes clear," said Nabil Abu Rudeina, a top aide to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. "We demand the United States put pressure on Israel to accept the American proposals" over a promised Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank, Mr. Abu Rudeina told AFP. Mr. Netanyahu, who has resisted the U.S. ideas, played down hopes for the London talks on Tuesday, cautioning against "raising expectations too high." He said the talks would address "core issues" remaining from 1995 interim accords, presumably including the troop withdrawals which are the main outstanding issue.

maic activity surrounding the latest U.S. peace push, Mr. Netanyahu's office announced late Tuesday that he would meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak Tuesday in Cairo.

It will be their first encounter in a year and follows sharp Egyptian criticism of Mr. Netanyahu's hard-line stance in negotiations with the

Palestinians.

Also next week U.S. Vice President Al Gore is scheduled to visit Israel for celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Jewish state on April 30.

Israeli press reports say Mr. Gore will meet with both Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat to press for agreement on the U.S. peace package ahead of

Israeli army arrests 11 in Yatta

YATTA (AFP) — Israeli soldiers detained 11 Palestinians and searched more than 30 homes in a sweep here overnight after a Jewish settler was shot dead in an argument with residents, witnesses said Wednesday.

A large force of Israeli army troops entered the West Bank town of Yatta, south of Hebron, and searched more than 30 homes, questioning their residents, witnesses said.

Israeli police sources said 11 residents were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the argument which broke out on Sunday between residents and Israelis from the nearby settlement of Moan.

Soldiers had raided the village immediately after the inci-

dent on Sunday, arresting nine people, including one man wearing blood-stained clothes.

The argument broke out when a group of Yatta residents tried to enter Arab land which Maoon settlers had seized to build a road and put up residential caravans.

During the scuffling, a Jewish settler, Dov Driban, was shot dead when Palestinians wrestled a pistol away from him, and a Palestinian was severely injured by another settler who opened fire with an M16 automatic rifle, the Israeli army said.

But the injured Palestinian told Palestinian police that it was the second settler who accidentally killed Driban when he opened fire with his M16. Hebron police chief Tareq Zaid

told journalists on Wednesday. Mr. Zaid said Palestinian police had requested Israel give them a copy of the coroners report on Driban.

Israeli police sources said the bullet which killed Driban came from a pistol not an M16, although tests had not yet been done to confirm it came from the pistol grabbed by the Palestinians.

Mussa Abu Sabha, a Hebron delegate to the Palestinian Legislative Council, blamed Israel for the shooting, saying it allows Jewish settlers to seize land and prevent its Arab owners from working on it.

"How can they let settlers do what they want and stop Palestinian from farming their own land," he told journalists.

Anguish versus optimism: The Kingdom's privatisation process sparks a nationwide debate

By Ghadeer Taher
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Mohammad Suleiman has been waiting for a telephone line for nearly 10 years. Today, he is optimistic he will finally get one as the Jordan Telecommunications Corporation (JTC) awaits privatisation. He understands little about privatisation, but he has been told it will be good for him and the country.

But not everyone shares his optimism about the future.

For Ahmad, a mid-management employee at the JTC, angst characterises his days. In a few months, the government-owned JTC will sell 40 per cent of its shares to a foreign strategic partner and be worried about losing his job as the company adopts new profit-oriented policies.

Both men reflect the essence of an ongoing nationwide debate about the perceived benefits and disadvantages of the government's controversial and much-delayed privatisation programme.

Officials, who say the country is still committed to a privatisation course which began in earnest only three years ago, are on the defensive as accusations of corruption, influence peddling and risking foreign domination of the economy increase.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali's government has come under unprecedented criticism from the Lower House of Parliament for promising to speed up privatisation, a key element in economic reforms launched by the International Monetary Fund in 1989. Detractors also cite poten-

tial massive job layoffs and higher prices for services as newly-privatised companies strive to become lean and mean to increase profits.

The government, backed by numerous examples from other countries charting the same course, has sound arguments to counter such claims. But officials agree that this government, like previous ones, has failed to adequately explain to the public why and how it intends to privatise state-owned enterprises.

"No government in the world can tackle the problems of poverty, health and education and still have enough resources to invest in rapidly advancing telecommunications technology, railroads, and other industries," a senior government official told the Jordan Times.

"We will give leading qualified firms and investors the opportunity to own and operate major economic activities within a regulatory framework that will limit the government role to that of an overseer."

The government said it was considering a proposal by parliament's key financial and economic committee to establish a state fund to receive the multi-million dollar proceeds of the sell-offs to be used for infrastructure and social development projects. The committee opposed using the money to meet expenditure needs.

Officials involved in the privatisation effort say the sell-off would generate employment by attracting much needed foreign direct investment (FDI), raising the economy's competitiveness and helping bolster

state finances by ending subsidies to loss-making enterprises.

Jordan is planning to privatise the Aqaba Railway Corporation, the Public Transport Company as well as two of the three main activities of National Electricity and Power Company (NEPCO) after the passage of 1996 Electricity Law opened the door for private investment in power generation. Requests for proposals will be sent to eleven qualified international firms early this summer for the building and operation of a 275-350 MW plant. On Tuesday, the government signed a deal with leading French Hotel Chain, ACCOR, allowing it to invest and operate the debt-riddled Ma'in Spa Hotel on

(Continued on page 12)

Company	Current Status	Future	Time
Aqaba Railway	government-owned	Concession to be given to private operator	12 months
Public Transport	government-owned	Private companies within regulatory framework	12 months
NEPCO	government-owned	Power generation and distribution to be privatised	18 months
Jordan Telecom	government-owned	JTC with financial advisor Meryll Lynch will sell 40% stake	18 months
RJ	government-owned	Create debt-free subsidiary for eventual sale to private sector invited international financial and legal advisors to submit bids	8 months
Jordan Cement Factories	49.5% government owned	Chose EFG Hermes to act as financial advisor on the sale of 33% of government share	8 months
Ma'in Spa	government-owned	Negotiating with French ACOR on a 20 year lease	2 months
Water Authority	government-owned	Water management contract for Greater Amman distribution system will be given to foreign firm	June 98

U.S. favours keeping sanctions on Iraq

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States will fight "very hard" to maintain sanctions against Iraq during a U.N. Security Council debate next week, U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson said Wednesday.

The U.S. decision comes despite "progress" made by U.N. arms inspectors in getting access to suspected Iraqi weapons sites, he said.

"It's a mixed bag," Mr. Richardson said on NBC television.

Mr. Richardson predicted the United States will face "an intense battle, because Iraq has a concerted [public relations] campaign, and they have friends in the Security Council."

The Security Council is set to decide April 27 whether to lift U.N. sanctions clamped on Baghdad for nearly eight years.

Washington insists that Baghdad must prove it has destroyed all its weapons of mass destruction before sanc-

tions can be removed.

On Feb. 23, Iraq signed an accord with the U.N. opening contested "presidential sites" to U.N. disarmament experts accompanied by international diplomats.

But in his latest report to the Security Council, Richard Butler, the head of the U.N. Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament, said there had been "virtually no progress" in eliminating Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in the last six months.

"On the issue of access to presidential sites, there is progress. The Iraqis did allow access," Mr. Richardson said. "They, however, have said they will not allow for repeat inspections. That's a problem, because we want unfettered, unlimited access."

Mr. Richardson also said there were "other problems" concerning Iraq's concealment of weapons of mass destruction including anthrax, VX, and ballistic missiles.

'Wall of suspicion' still divides Iran from U.S. — minister

TEHRAN (AFP) — A "wall of suspicion" still divides Iran and the United States, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi said Wednesday in an attack on Washington's decision to extend its Persian-language radio broadcasts to Iran.

"The wall of suspicion still exists between Iran and the United States and this American decision is a flagrant interference in our domestic affairs," Mr. Kharazi told Iranian radio.

"Our people will not allow themselves to be influenced

by this sort of psychological campaign," he said.

The U.S. State Department announced last Wednesday that it planned to boost its Persian-language broadcasts to Iran but denied the move was intended to destabilize the government of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

"The purpose of these broadcasts is not to beam anti-government propaganda into Iran," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

"Rather, this new service would provide more detailed

factual reporting on political, social and foreign policy issues affecting Iran."

The Iranian foreign ministry condemned the move Sunday saying it "shows more and more the contradiction between the words and the actions of American leaders towards Iran."

The controversial proposal advocated by the U.S. Congress comes at an awkward time for the U.S. government, which is seeking to open up a dialogue with Iran that could end nearly two decades of enmity.

Algeria urged to admit envoys investigating torture

GENEVA (AFP) — The United States and the European Union urged Algeria on Wednesday for failing to admit U.N. envoys investigating allegations of summary executions and torture during the six-year Islamist insurgency.

British Ambassador Audrey Glover said the EU regretted that Algeria had given no firm commitment or dates for fact-finding visits by special rapporteurs working for the U.N. human rights commission.

"We cannot therefore remain silent when a United Nations member state repeatedly refuses to cooperate with the special procedures of the commission," she said.

Algeria "needs to make substantive progress on this very soon if the concerns of the international community are to be allayed and the very serious allegations of grave human rights violations are to be dealt with," she said.

Ambassador Nancy Rubin, the head of the U.S. delegation to the human rights commission, said Washington noted with "great regret" that the Algerian government had refused to take such a step toward cooperation.

"The situation in Algeria is a tragedy that concerns us all," Ms. Rubin said.

"Acts of terrorism there have targeted innocent civilians — men, women and children — killing and maiming 75,000 people since 1992 when the violence began," she said.

"Two thousand of these have occurred in the last four months alone. Others have fallen victim to systematic rape and kidnapping," Ms. Rubin said.

Ms. Rubin said Washington believed "the terrorist Armed Islamic Group is clearly responsible for most of this shocking slaughter," but still wanted to determine responsibility in some cases of violence.



Thousands of Turkish Islamists Wednesday gather outside Istanbul city hall to protest a court sentence against Istanbul Mayor Tayyip Erdogan, who was convicted of inciting hatred in a speech. Demonstrators blocked traffic as Mr. Erdogan spoke at a rowdy news conference in his office (Reuters photo)

Turkish Islamists rally in show of strength against crackdown

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Some ten thousand people took to the streets of Istanbul Wednesday to protest the sentencing of the city's Islamist mayor, in the Islamist movement's first show of strength since the beginning of a crackdown in Turkey.

"Mosques are our barracks, the minarets our bayonets, the domes our helmets and the believers our soldiers," the crowd chanted, repeating the statement for which Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan was sentenced to 10 months in jail on Tuesday.

"The shadow of politics has fallen on the judiciary," Mr. Erdogan told the rally, calling for freedom of thought and speech in Turkey.

"I respect our courts, but I cannot respect their erroneous decisions," he added.

"What matters to me, is the decision you have taken [to elect me]."

Traffic was blocked by the demonstrators, who carried posters protesting the ruling and in support of the mayor.

"We appeal to the independence of the courts," Abdullahi Sener, former Turkish Finance Minister and delegate of the new Islamist Virtue Party, said in a speech before the crowd.

Mr. Sener called on Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz to "fight together for democracy" and expressed confidence that the Turkish court of appeals would quash the conviction.

A Turkish state security court in south-eastern Diyarbakir on Tuesday found Mr. Erdogan guilty of incitement to religious hatred and sentenced him to 10 months in jail, although he remains free pending appeal.

Mr. Erdogan, who has won plaudits for his job running the historic metropolis, insisted during his trial that his words had been misconstrued and he had not intended to make "any provocation whatsoever."

If his appeal fails and the sentence is upheld, Mr. Erdogan will be forced to step down as mayor and will lose the right to stand for election.

The rally in Istanbul was the first of its kind since a crackdown in recent months against the Islamists.

There had been no demonstrations of this size since the banning of the Islamist Welfare Party by the Turkish constitutional court in January or following the announcement in March of a series of government measures aimed at weakening the Islamists.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iranian parliament adopts law on 'Islamic care'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's parliament adopted legislation Wednesday which seeks to apply Islamic precepts to medical care and would allow only female hospital employees to provide treatment to women. The law on "Islamic medical care" was adopted by a large majority in the conservative-dominated parliament, the Majlis, despite the opposition of the government of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, parliamentary sources said.

Yassin to visit Syria as part of Arab, Islamic tour

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The founder of the group Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, is to visit Syria soon as part of a tour of Arab and Islamic states, a party official said here Wednesday. "Sheikh Yassin will make a tour of Arab and Islamic countries, and a visit to Syria is planned but the date has yet to be fixed," Mohammad Nazzari, a member of the party's political bureau, told a news conference here.

Rebel Kurd ex-commander to appear in court Friday

DIYARBAKIR (AFP) — A former top commander of Turkey's separatist Kurdish rebels, who was captured in northern Iraq last week, is expected to appear in court Friday, judicial officials said. Serdin Sakik, former commander of the separatist Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK) in southeastern Turkey, was captured by Turkish commandos on April 13 and brought to Diyarbakir for interrogation.

Turkish parliament to probe Yilmaz' finances

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish parliament voted Wednesday to investigate Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's personal finances, a move which jeopardises his government. Deputies from a left-wing party which usually backs Mr. Yilmaz's minority coalition cabinet from outside the government instead supported an opposition motion seeking the probe. Following the surprise vote, a parliamentary committee will be set up to investigate Mr. Yilmaz's finances, Deputy Speaker Yassir Hatipoglu said.

Mortar attack on Algerian town kills five

ALGIERS (AFP) — Mortar shelling of the Algerian town of Blida, 50 kilometres south of Algiers, killed five people and injured around 40, doctors reported Wednesday. The mortar rounds were fired late Tuesday from the Chrea mountains above the town, causing panic in areas between the outlying Ouled Yaiche and the centre of Blida, which is of the first military region, the newspaper La Tribune said.

Israeli soldier wounded in Hizbollah attack

TYRE (AFP) — An Israeli soldier was wounded in southern Lebanon on Wednesday in a mortar attack claimed by Hizbollah militia, security sources said. The soldier was injured when mortar rounds fell on an Israeli position known as Radar close to the town of Naqurah, near the Israeli-Lebanese border, they said.

Jordan pushes for movement

(Continued from page 12)

Palestinians. It was not surprising then that King Hussein wrote a letter of protest to Mr. Netanyahu on Friday, only a day after meeting with him in Elat.

The letter, which preceded the visits of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen to the region, reflected King Hussein's frustration with Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to commit to the American proposals for a troop withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank at Thursday's Elat talks, officials told the Jordan Times earlier this week.

According to various sources, the letter which was described as "cordial but strong," outlined all terms of reference of the Arab-Israeli conflict and all agreements signed by the Jewish State with the Palestinians, and warned of the dire consequences of failing to move ahead with the overdue second redeployment.

King Hussein's letter was primarily directed against Mr. Netanyahu, officials say. But analysts assert that King Hussein, aware of the deep respect he enjoys with Israelis, as well as the Jewish state's notoriety for media leaks, must have also been targeting Israeli public opinion.

At this point, Jordan firmly places the blame on Mr. Netanyahu for the continuing impasse, officials and analysts say. As such, it is believed that the onus is completely on the Israeli government to avert an absolute collapse in the peace process which would have major repercussions not only on Jordan but also on the entire region.

Meanwhile, analysts say, Jordan has little choice but to continue its present course of both pressing the Israeli government and ensuring good relations with major regional and international players so that its peace-making role is recognised in the future.

Somali gunmen decline ransom for aid workers

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Gunmen holding 10 aid workers hostage in north Mogadishu declined a \$32,000 ransom offered by Somali businessmen, saying it was too little, a local paper reported Wednesday.

The Bandair newspaper said the businessmen offered the money to the kidnappers to compensate them for expenses they had incurred since the abduction of nine foreigners and one Somali on April 15.

The kidnappers have reportedly been spending extravagantly in anticipation of receiving a million-dollar ransom they have demanded for the release of workers for the Red Cross and Red Crescent

organisations. They have been buying food and cigarettes on credit from a small shop in Karan district of north Mogadishu, promising to pay when they receive the ransom, a businessman said.

"An average gunman smokes more than two packets of Kenyan-made Sportsman cigarettes a day and they have been chewing increasing amounts of khat since last Wednesday," the businessman, who asked not to be named, told reporters.

Khat is a mild leafy narcotic chewed by Somalis and people in the Gulf.

A militia source told AFP that the \$32,000 offer had

divided the kidnappers, with some of them willing to accept the money and others sticking to a previous demand for \$100,000 for each hostage.

In Nairobi, meanwhile, the executive director of the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, on Wednesday described the kidnapping as a "serious affront to humanitarian action."

"The incident underlines the continuing difficulties faced by all humanitarian organisations — we are increasingly being targeted directly in areas where conflict, hostilities and insecurity are present," Ms. Bellamy told a news conference at the end of a five-day visit to east Africa.

Sudan threatens to end relief deliveries

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan has threatened to withdraw permission for the delivery of international relief to war-affected areas in the south if the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) continues with practices Khartoum alleges are obstructing relief operations.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail told a press conference Tuesday that his government had warned on issuing the permission early this month that it would only be temporary if the SPLA attempted to utilise it for its own ends.

"The government will order a

halt to those relief operations if the rebel movement continues practices obstructive to the relief efforts," Mr. Ismail told the news conference, to which he invited foreign ambassadors and other diplomats in Khartoum.

He cited as an example an attack he said the SPLA launched on the Arab Rizeiqat tribe in southern Darfur on April 14 in which he said 42 people were killed and 11 others wounded and 5,000 head of cattle were looted.

Mr. Ismail said this kind of act would hinder the passage of relief from north to south

Sudan, noting that although three weeks had passed since relief deliveries were allowed international organisations were still saying that parts of south Sudan were hit by famine.

"We thought that our commitment to opening corridors for relief, our willingness for a ceasefire and our endeavours to dissuade the border tribes from taking revenge would be acclaimed worldwide," Mr. Ismail said, referring to communities on the border between the largely Arab and Muslim north and the Christian and animist south.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes
14:10 Cartoon — The Adventures of Dinky Doo
14:30 Doc. — The Animal Park
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 NBA
18:00 Drama — The Burned Bridge
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Science Magazine — Alomex Crochus
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Big Brother Jake
20:00 Drama — The Great Romances
20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn, the Medicine Woman
21:10 The Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film — "Solo"
23:59 Comedy — Never The Twain
00:30 End of T.X.

Friday Programmes
14:10 Cartoon — The Adventures of Teddy Ruapin
14:30 Wishbone
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 He Shoots, He Scores
17:30 Doc. — Blue Water Dreaming
18:10 Tarzan
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Educational Programme — All to La Terra
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air"
20:00 Documentary — Life on the Internet

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

20:30 The Album Show
21:10 Drama: "Babylon 5"
22:00 News in English
22:30 Mini-series: "Sackett" (Pt. II)
23:10 Comedy — The Nanny
23:30 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:31 Fajr
05:54 Sunrise/Duha
12:34 Dhur
16:12 Asr
19:14 Maghreb
20:38 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweetside, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Relative cold weather conditions will prevail, skies partly cloudy with a chance of showers in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom, and winds northwesterly moderate to active. On Friday, there will be a gradual rise of temperatures. In Aqaba, it will be fine and cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Humidity readings: Amman 54 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Fayed Dabbas 759115
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 598140
Dr. Fakhri Bibisi 582233
Dr. Mazen Nball 830435
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 4625672
Al Salam pharmacy 4644945
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
JRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy 1
ZARQA:
Dr. Zuhour Al Qadi 906606
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630241
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617011
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 7871111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 7731111
Radio Jordan 7741111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdi 56661317
Husseini Medical Centre Tel. 858813, 858856
Lazima 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akileh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5670771
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7710113
Al-Bashir 7751112/5
Army, Marka 8916111/6
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50

Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
URBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)514111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 44453200 where it should always be verified.
Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:45 Sanaa (RJ)
10:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:15 New Delhi (RJ)

10:25 Bombay (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:40 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:50 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:40 Colombo (RJ)
15:35 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 Moscow (RJ)
17:30 London (RJ)
18:45 Kuwait (RJ)
19:10 Athens (RJ)
20:10 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
00:10 Lamaca (RJ)
00:30 Paris (add) (RJ)
03:15 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
06:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

13:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:10 Sharjah (AE)
15:40 Doha (QR)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
19:00 Paris (AF)
20:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10 London (BA)
21:10 Beirut (ME)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
23:20 Istanbul (TK)
23:35 Lamaca (CY)
01:15 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)

(For Thursday and Friday)
10:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport) (RW)
20:20 Tel Aviv (QAIA — on Friday (RW)
22:35 Tel Aviv (QAIA — on

Thursday (RW)
23:50 Amman (Marka Airport from Aqaba) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45 Beirut (RJ)
07:20 Moscow (RJ)
11:55 Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
12:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:45 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:20 Kuwait (RJ)
13:00 Paris (RJ)
13:20 London (RJ)
13:20 Athens (RJ)
19:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
20:50 Lamaca (RJ)
21:10 Cairo (RJ)
21:20 Jeddah (RJ)
00:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
01:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

06:15 Istanbul (TK)
07:00 Frankfurt (LH)
08:20 London (BA)
08:45 Beirut (ME)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:00 Abu Dhabi (GF)
16:00 Amman, Algiers (AE)
16:30 Doha (QR)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK)
21:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
22:40 Cairo (MS)
02:15 Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 Rome (AZ)

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK

Scandinavian film "The Brothers" (with subtitles) in English at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday, April 25, at 7 p.m.

FILMS

Spanish film "Montana" at the Jordanian Cultural Centre, Amman on Thursday at 7 p.m.
"The Other Face of the Coin" (in English) about artist Josep de Sot with commentary by Danyel Al Fuman, Jalal Fakhour on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.
"My name is Benito Bocchi" (with subtitles) at the University of Jordan on April 30.

Home

Man arrested abusing wife

By Rama Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police said on Wednesday they arrested a 35-year-old father suspected of abusing seven of his eight children and his wife. The children, aged between four and nine, were taken to the police station and treated for bruises and scratches on their bodies caused by an electrical cord and other objects, police spokesman Jafar Jafar told the Jordan Times.

The children, who were admitted to the Family Protection Unit on Tuesday, were in a miserable state, wearing dirty and torn clothes, he added.

The 25-year-old mother was also examined by Dr. Jafar.

The woman had had several bruises and scratches on her face and body, he said. "She told me that her husband had beaten her again," he said.

According to the Family Protection Unit, police received a phone call from an unidentified citizen asking them about several children who had been left in a house for almost two weeks without any family care.

"We went to the house and found all seven children sitting on a bed in poor condition," Dr. Jafar said.

The father, who has been charged with the offence, is currently in police custody pending further investigations, he added.

"The man kicked his wife out of the house after a fight two weeks ago, leaving the children without care since," he said.

Jordan to observe International Book with cultural pro

BOJAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Culture and Youth is preparing a cultural programme to mark International Book Week, which is observed today, according to a ministry official.

Secretary General Mahdi Al-Tal on Wednesday said the ministry is keen on exposing Jordan's cultural heritage and promoting the rights of authors and the work of some people and artists. A law on copyright was passed in 1992 for this purpose, he added.

By observing the day, which is observed at the world level by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the ministry aims to conduct an art and culture organisation member.

Al-Tal has always respected the cultural heritage of Jordan, he said, and has been promoting it through various programmes and projects, including the establishment of the National Library and the National Archives, and the work of some people and artists.

Al-Tal said the ministry will be observing the day, which is observed at the world level by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the ministry aims to conduct an art and culture organisation member.

What's Going On

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK
Scandinavian film "The Brothers" (with subtitles) in English at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday, April 25, at 7 p.m.

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"My name is Benito Bocchi" (with subtitles) at the University of Jordan on April 30.

Man arrested for abusing wife, children

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

Police apprehend
abused child's father

AMMAN — Police said on Wednesday they arrested a 33-year-old father suspected of abusing seven of his eight children and his wife.

The children, aged between four and nine, suffered from bites and abrasions and bruises on various parts of their bodies caused by an electrical cord and blunt objects, police surgeon Hani Jahshan told the Jordan Times.

"The children, who were admitted to the Family Protection Unit on Tuesday, were in a miserable situation, wearing dirty and torn clothes," he added.

The 28-year-old mother was also examined by Dr. Jahshan.

"The woman had four-week-old bruises and scars left by biting when I examined her on Wednesday," he said. "She told me that her husband had beaten her up."

According to Hussein Sarhan, head of the Family Protection Unit, police received a phone call from an unidentified citizen informing them about several children who had been left in a house for almost two weeks without any family care.

"We went to the house and found all seven children sitting on a bed in poor condition," Dr. Sarhan said.

The father, who has denied charges that he tortured his children, is currently in police custody pending further investigations, he added.

"The man kicked his wife out of the house after a fight four weeks ago, leaving the children without care since," he said.

In a separate incident Wednesday, police apprehended the father of an eight-year-old girl who on Monday sought refuge at the Family Protection Unit with burn scars all over her body, Dr. Sarhan said.

The child, who lived with her father and stepmother in Al Hussein Refugee Camp, told the police surgeon that her dad had whipped her and placed hot objects on different parts of her body.

The girl, identified as Abeer, said she fled the house and headed to seek help from her mother, who had re-married and lives in Zarqa.

"The father confessed to torturing his daughter to take revenge on his wife for their failed marriage," Dr. Sarhan said.

Both fathers involved in the separate cases have been transferred to the criminal prosecution for further questioning.

Dr. Sarhan said police were still looking for an unidentified citizen who allegedly took a two-year-old child to the Municipality Garden and attempted to sexually assault him five days ago.

"The child was brought to us by a citizen who was walking near the area and saw the man undressing the child," Dr. Sarhan said.

The citizen had a fight with the man before the latter fled, leaving the child behind.

The unit was established recently to deal with victims of domestic violence. It operates under the Public Security Department.

Jordan, Tunisia issue call to advance peace process

Higher joint committee meeting in Tunis ends with free trade agreement

TUNIS (Petra) — Jordan and Tunisia Wednesday called for efforts to be made to remove obstacles impeding the peace process, particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

The two countries made the call in a joint communiqué issued at the end of a two-day meeting in Tunis by the Joint Jordanian-Tunisian Higher Committee, which was co-chaired by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and his Tunisian counterpart Hamed Qarawi.

They also emphasised the need for all parties to be committed to the implementation of signed agreements in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in accordance

with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

In the communiqué, the two sides demanded a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the resumption of Syrian-Israeli negotiations, as well as a complete Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425.

Jordan and Tunisia called for efforts to develop and consolidate joint Arab action, strengthen the Arab League and promote inter-Arab solidarity.

The communiqué said the joint committee reviewed the situation in the Middle East and called on the sponsors of the peace process, the European Union, the non-aligned nations, the U.N. and world organisations to lend support to the peace process to ensure that Israel respects the requirements of peace based on the exchange of land for peace and implements its agreements with Arab parties.

The two sides announced their resolve to provide all possible economic and political backing to the Palestinian people.

Referring to Iraq, the communiqué welcomed the Baghdad-U.N. agreement and expressed hope that it would lead to the lifting of sanctions imposed on Iraq

since 1990 and end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The two sides also called for the lifting of sanctions on the Libyan people, especially since Libya has now expressed its readiness to reach a peaceful settlement to the Lockerbie problem.

They voiced support for the United Arab Emirates in its quest to regain ownership of the three islands in the Gulf occupied by Iran, calling for a peaceful solution to the problem through the International Court of Justice.

The two sides reaffirmed the importance of the Barcelona Declaration, which paves the way for European-Arab association

and cooperation in political, economic, social and security fields.

Jordan and Tunisia reviewed questions of common concern and expressed their desire to further promote economic and trade cooperation.

According to the communiqué, the two countries decided to gradually create a free trade zone for their national products. To achieve this objective, they signed an agreement on setting up a free trade zone.

The two countries decided to give priority to imports from each other, coordinate economic matters and increase the volume of trade

to reach \$50 million annually by the year 2000.

Jordan and Tunisia also passed decisions on promoting cooperation between businesspeople and industrialists from the two countries, cooperating in the fields of investment, agriculture, civil aviation, land, and maritime and air transport, increasing cooperation in tourism, and executing cultural agreements.

They agreed to sign a protocol on sports and youth and to cooperate in the fields of security, the judiciary, health information, administrative development, social affairs and vocational training.



Die Saengerknaben vom Wienerwald

Austrian boys choir to perform in Amman

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, the Austrian boys choir "Die Saengerknaben vom Wienerwald" (literally, the Boys Choir from the Vienna Woods) will perform today at the Royal Cultural Centre.

The concert, which is being presented as an entertainment show for the whole family, is in support of the SOS Children's Village Association of Jordan.

The ensemble is the perfect ambassador of the Viennese choir tradition. With a repertoire that covers Joseph Strauss, Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár, Franz Schubert and Ludwig Gruber, among other composers, the "Boys from the Woods" are bound to delight all lovers of choral music

in Amman.

The choir was originally founded in 1921 by Stanislaus Maruszky in Maria Enzersdorf, near Modling. The young boys usually join the choir at the early age of seven or eight, and follow a three-year music course. They give an average of 50 concerts every year.

In 1996, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of its foundation, the ensemble made its very successful 14th concert tour of Japan, where it has been performing since 1968.

Fresh, clear voices and lovely, catchy melodies are the trademarks of the Boys Choir. The singers remain young children before all. They love to sing and play on stage. Sharing their feelings and their love for music with the audience is what they like most.

PPD chief, foreign Arabic daily engaging in heated public debate

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Months of tension between the Press and Publications Department (PPD) and the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat have turned into an open tug-of-war, with a local newspaper providing a forum for bitter exchanges.

Al Arab Al Yawm Arabic daily ran an article Tuesday by PPD Director Bilal Tal criticising Al Hayat's chief editor, Jibad Khazen, for a column he wrote last week slamming an alleged crackdown on press freedoms since he took over in November.

Mr. Khazen, one of the Arab World's veteran journalists, claimed that Mr. Tal had banned around 35 copies of Al Hayat from entering Jordan over the past five months, compared to less than 25 copies that were not authorised to enter the Kingdom in the previous ten years.

He also charged Mr. Tal of becoming "more royal than His Majesty King Hussein" in his endeavours to safeguard government measures taken to protect Jordan and its democracy and freedoms.

Mr. Khazen also expressed surprise with the PPD's recent hard-line approach toward Al Hayat, explaining that the paper's editorial policy concerning Jordan has always been consistent.

"The only thing that has changed is that Mr. Tal has become head of the PPD," Mr. Khazen wrote.

Mr. Khazen reviewed the peace treaty Jordan signed with Israel and concluded that Jordan had suffered more than gained.

"Jordan's economy worsened and Hamas leader Khaled Misha'al survived an assassination attempt by Mossad agents," he added.

"How can Mr. Tal deal with such issues? Does he think that by banning people from writing on crucial issues that they will eventually disappear?"

Mr. Tal responded in a letter to Mr. Khazen, published in Al Arab Al Yawm, that he was surprised with the conclusions and assumptions of Mr. Khazen, saying "he has obviously assumed the role of a consultant to Jordan, forgetting at the same time the long history of the Jordanian leadership's good judgement and wisdom."

Mr. Tal criticised Mr. Khazen's role as chief editor of Al Hayat and said that he should always make sure that his paper reports the truth.

"The number of editions confiscated by PPD as stated in Mr. Khazen's article is completely false and baseless. In fact, the number 35 in the past five months is highly exaggerated," he said, refraining at the same time from providing a figure.

He also said his department did not confiscate Al Hayat editions because it felt like doing so or wanted to restrict freedom of expression, but because it found certain articles in the paper that violated the Press and Publications

Law.

"We respect and call for freedom of expression but we do not allow the publication of certain items that are lacking truth and objectivity, especially if they do not reflect the true position or the true image of Jordan," he said.

"In the end, the law has to prevail, and we will make sure it will, especially if it stops papers from publishing false information in the name of freedom of expression."

Many journalists claim that the PPD has tightened its grip over local and foreign reporters in the past year and confiscated many international editions of foreign newspapers.

The PPD denies such claims, saying that it is acting within the limits of the law.

The government issued a temporary press law last May which the High Court found "unconstitutional" and annulled several months later.

The law was condemned and described by the press as well as human rights advocates as restrictive to freedom of expression.

It had extended the list of issues forbidden to be reported in the press, increased fines for violations of the law from a maximum of 10,000 in the original law to a maximum of 100,000 in the temporary law, placed tough conditions for employing chief editors, and raised capital requirement of dailies and weeklies, forcing over 13 tabloids to close down.

Court sentences man to four years for weapons possession

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The State Security Court Wednesday sentenced a 34-year-old man to four years in prison with hard labour after he was found guilty of attempting to manufacture explosives and possessing illegal weapons.

Ismael Shukri was originally charged with smuggling weapons to the West Bank and plotting subversive acts, but the court decided to amend the charges.

The military court, presided over by Judge Youssef Fa'ouri and including Judges Ahmad Ayas and Fawaz Baqour, first sentenced Mr. Shukri to seven and one-half years with hard labour but commuted the sentence "because the defendant has no criminal record and supports a family."

"We expected the court to acquit our clients, since the tes-

timonies of the explosive experts were contradictory," Attorney Saleh Armouti, one of three attorneys defending the suspect, told the Jordan Times.

Attorneys Salam Shunur, Islam Elian, and Armouti said they were planning to appeal the verdict at the Court of Cassation.

"We do not believe that there was a case against our client to start with," Atty. Armouti added.

The court heard several prosecution and defence witnesses during the five-month trial, including an explosives expert called by the defence who testified that the substance the authorities found on Mr. Shukri could not be detonated.

Two other defendants, Ali Abdul Karim and Mohammad Mubarak, both tried in absentia, were each sentenced to 15-year imprisonment terms with hard labour.

Mr. Shukri testified in court that he owned machine guns because he was a member of a radical Palestinian group until 1992, and that the hand-grenade the authorities seized from his house was "in fact a piece of a small metal box shaped like a grenade that I found in the street and gave to my children to play with as a toy."

The prosecution charged that the arms and the handgrenade, which was filled with potassium nitrate, were intended for terrorist attacks.

Several prosecution witnesses testified under oath that they found automatic weapons and explosives in the defendant's house and in a suitcase, which the prosecution charged belonged to Mr. Shukri, hidden in the Zarqa area near the Dead Sea.

State Prosecutor Samih Majali had asked the court for the maximum penalty.

Former justice reiterates charges that judiciary lacks independence

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The former chief of the Higher Judicial Council, Farouq Kilani, who was removed from office by fellow judges on Feb. 23, Tuesday reiterated his charges that the government interferes in the affairs of the judicial branch.

"The judiciary will never be independent as long as we have ministers and influential officials interfering in cases at courts," Judge Kilani said in a lecture at the Arab Forum.

The Higher Judicial Council, acting upon a recommendation by Minister of Justice Riyad Shakkat, voted unanimously to retire Judge Kilani, who was then the Council's president and head of the Court of Cassation.

According to the Independence of the Judiciary Law, the minister has a right to recommend the retirement of any judge.

In March, the minister explained that he had no personal reasons for recommending the retirement of Judge Kilani but rather his decision was "dictated by the interest of the judiciary in a manner that

would ensure harmony and security for all those who work in the justice system."

But Judge Kilani, who was appointed by Mr. Shakkat, said his retirement was related to his fight against corrupt judges, which he said was blessed by His Majesty King Hussein but opposed by the minister.

"I was not against any judge. I only investigated cases that were referred to me by the anti-corruption department [at the General Intelligence Department] about corrupt judges, and I gave a memo to the King including the names of judges our investigations proved were corrupt, and the King signed it," Judge Kilani noted.

Judge Kilani asked an audience of attorneys, judges and former judges: "How can judges rule fairly if they are subjected to threats of being removed if they rule in a way certain officials do not like?"

He charged that he was removed because there was a contention in the government that he played a role in overturning the controversial temporary amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law.

"I only wrote my opinion in the press case, but did not sign it because I was promoted to another post. The judges of the High Court of Justice, who took the final decision, followed my recommendation," Judge Kilani said.

In January, the High Court of Justice revoked the amendments to the law, which forced 13 newspapers to fold, on the ground that their enactment in May 1997 was unconstitutional.

Judge Kilani cited a speech His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan made at the Judicial Institute, in which the Prince emphasised the importance of the judicial independence.

"Prince Hassan sees the independence of the judiciary as having political and social dimensions beyond its legal dimensions," he said.

He quoted Prince Hassan as saying: "Judicial independence is granted by the Constitution. A judge should resist any pressures to which he/she may be subjected. Responding to interference makes the judiciary lose its independence."

"But still, ministers interfere in any case that is seen in courts," Judge Kilani charged.

Islamic organisation expresses interest in developing ties with Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — The secretary general of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), Abdul Aziz Tweiiri, met Wednesday with Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and voiced the organisation's interest in further developing cooperation with Jordan.

Dr. Tweiiri said the organisation aims to serve its member countries, contribute to the development of culture, education and science in Islamic states, open a dialogue with other world cultures, and present the true image of Islam.

Dr. Ensour and the ISESCO secretary general

reviewed scopes of cooperation between the organisation and Jordan in cultural fields, as well as joint activities.

The acting prime minister expressed Jordan's appreciation of ISESCO's role in serving the interests of Islamic countries, strengthening relations among them and spearheading campaigns designed to rectify misconceptions about Islam in the

world at large.

Dr. Ensour also commended ISESCO for its achievements at other levels, in particular for building bridges of understanding and cooperation among Islamic countries.

He added that Jordan was grateful to Muslim nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, for ISESCO's programmes and activities.

Jordan to observe International Book Day with cultural programme

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Culture and Youth has prepared a cultural programme to mark "International Book and Publishing Rights Day," which Jordan observes today, according to a ministry official.

Secretary General Mahmoud Tal on Wednesday said the ministry is keen on exposing Jordan's cultural heritage as well as protecting the rights of authors and the work of creative people and artists. A modern copyright law was enacted in 1992 for this purpose, he added.

By observing the day, which is sponsored at the world level by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Jordan can project its role and the activities it conducts as an active organisation member, said Dr. Tal.

Jordan has always respected internationally recognised principles and rules concerning the protection of the rights of authors and the right of publishing with a view to promoting and encouraging creativity and excellence, he added.

Dr. Tal said the ministry carries out activities to promote culture in different parts of Jordan and gives particular attention to traditional handicrafts, theatre, children's songs and the nation's cultural heritage in general.

Mohammad Abbadi, acting director of the national library, Wednesday said his department gives due attention to raising cultural awareness by circulating books to all public libraries, clubs and other associations.

The national library, he added, is concerned with collecting manuscripts, documents, periodicals and other tools of cultural heritage. It also supervises the work of public libraries and organises seminars and conferences related to library work as well as book exhibitions in Jordan and abroad.

At present, Mr. Abbadi said, the national library contains 75,000 books and reference materials in addition to 420 specialised documents, 400,000 photos, 200 magazines and periodicals in English and Arabic on the work of Jordanian writers and all the editions of the Official Gazette since it began publishing in 1923.

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Mr. Khazen, one of the Arab World's veteran journalists, claimed that Mr. Tal had banned around 35 copies of Al Hayat from entering Jordan over the past five months, compared to less than 25 copies that were not authorised to enter the Kingdom in the previous ten years.

He also charged Mr. Tal of becoming "more royal than His Majesty King Hussein" in his endeavours to safeguard government measures taken to protect Jordan and its democracy and freedoms.

Mr. Khazen also expressed surprise with the PPD's recent hard-line approach toward Al Hayat, explaining that the paper's editorial policy concerning Jordan has always been consistent.

"The only thing that has changed is that Mr. Tal has become head of the PPD," Mr. Khazen wrote.

What's Going On

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK
* Swedish film "The Brothers Lionheart" (with subtitles in English) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday, April 25, at 7:00 p.m.

FILMS
* Spanish film "Montoyas y Tarantos" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
* "Jurassic Park" at the American Center, Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
* "The Other Face of the Form" (in English) about artist Nicolas de Stael (with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour) at Darat Al Fann, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

* "My name is Benoit Brecht — Exile in USA" (with subtitles in German) at the University of

Jordan on Saturday, April 25, at 1:00 p.m.

CONCERT
* Classical music concert by the Austrian boys choir "Die Saengerknaben vom Wienerwald" (the Boys Choir from the Vienna Woods) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS
* Art exhibition at the Abhiyah School for Girls, Jabal Amman (Tel. 4624872), until April 25.
* Works by Yassin Al Mohammadawi at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 56813034), until May 7.

* Photographic exhibition entitled "A Tour in the Dead Sea" by Jausen and Savignac at the French Cultural Centre, until April 30.

Jordan Times

Tel.

5684311-5699634

Yeltsin to meet parliament speakers on eve of vote

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin stood firm in his support for Interim Premier Sergei Kiriyenko Wednesday, ruling out a compromise candidate despite agreeing to 11th-hour crisis talks with parliamentary leaders.

The Communist Party, which opposes Mr. Kiriyenko, meanwhile said it would demand a roll call vote Friday. In theory, this hurls the Kremlin's chances of winning approval for the young technocrat to run the government.

Mr. Yeltsin is to meet State Duma lower house speaker Gennady Seleznyov and his Federation Council upper house counterpart Yegor Stroyev on the eve of Friday's decisive, third-round vote on Mr. Kiriyenko's confirmation as premier.

The talks will centre on the Duma's vote on Mr. Kiriyenko. Mr. Stroyev was cited by ITAR-TASS as saying, when deputies face the choice of either confirming Mr. Yeltsin's nominee or seeing their chamber dissolved and fresh elections called.

But the Kremlin moved to scotch suggestions the meeting signalled Mr. Yeltsin had softened his position and was prepared to dump the young technocrat he plucked from semi-obscure last month.

"The position of the Russian president on the candidacy of Sergei Kiriyenko as prime minister is definitive and cannot be

changed," said a Kremlin statement cited by Interfax.

Mr. Kiriyenko, who garnered just 143 and 115 votes in the Duma on the two previous rounds of voting, needs 226 votes to the 450-seat lower house to secure confirmation.

Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov said the Communist Party will demand an open ballot at Friday's vote, Interfax.

Mr. Kiriyenko was humiliated in a similar roll call ballot in a second confirmation vote last Friday, which stiffened party discipline and made it more difficult for the Kremlin to buy votes.

He polled just 115 votes compared to the 143 he garnered on the first round, well below the 226 votes he needs to pass.

Wednesday's developments came amid increasing signs that deputies would back Mr. Kiriyenko, despite the vehement opposition of Communists who dominate the lower chamber.

"Ninety-nine per cent of deputies from my faction will vote for Kiriyenko," said ultranationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, whose party voted against Mr. Yeltsin's protégé last Friday.

"We will vote for a secret ballot, and that means Kiriyenko could get 230 votes," he added. Analysts said last week's roll call vote stiffened party discipline and prevented the Kremlin from vote-buying.

Moscow Echo radio reported that a majority of regional governors, who sit in the upper house Federation Council, were against dissolution and said that deputies should vote for Mr. Kiriyenko.

Vasily Starodubtsev, governor of Tula region, 200 kilometres south of Moscow, said: "One should not tell the Duma what it should do, but it should take such a decision (to back Kiriyenko), which will avoid a political crisis."

Communist Party leader Zyuganov, marking the anniversary of Lenin's birth at the revolutionary leader's Red Square mausoleum, insisted he would "convince" a special meeting of his party's central committee Thursday "to vote against Sergei Kiriyenko."

However, the leader of the People's Power faction, hitherto allied with the Communists against Mr. Kiriyenko, Tuesday called for deputies to approve the candidate to stave off dissolution.

Try to seek a compromise with Mr. Yeltsin to avoid the costly dissolution of parliament, which neither side really wants.

"You will find out that the Duma will not be dissolved," Mr. Stroyev, who with Mr. Seleznyov is a perennial mediator between Russia's feuding president and Duma deputies, ITAR-TASS reported.

Mr. Seleznyov said he would ask Mr. Yeltsin to personally present Mr. Kiriyenko's candidacy, adding: "I am going to ask the president to allow Mr. Kiriyenko to lift a corner of the veil surrounding the composition of the government."

"Deputies want to know who is going to apply the government's programme and who from the previous government will not be in the new one."

"Moreover, I am going to ask the president that the Duma be kept informed of plans for the (Russian-controlled) Kuril Islands," which are at the centre of a territorial dispute with Japan.

The upper house meanwhile plays host to Mr. Kiriyenko Wednesday to put questions to the candidate about his government programme, already twice rejected by the lower house.

Mr. Yeltsin met the two speakers soon after the political crisis erupted in Moscow on March 23, when the Russian president sacked the previous government and appointed the little-known Kiriyenko to draw up a new cabinet.

The talks yielded a round-table with all Russia's political leaders to discuss the stand-off between president and parliament over Mr. Kiriyenko, though Mr. Yeltsin conceded little.

The stand-off between president and parliament has threatened the most explosive showdown in Moscow since Mr. Yeltsin sent tanks to crush a parliamentary uprising in October 1993.



Chief of staff General Anatoly Kvashnin (right) welcomes Supreme Allied Commander for Europe General Wesley Clark to a top level meeting in Moscow. Defence Minister Igor Sergeev failed to show up for the meeting with NATO's top general Wednesday, as planned, and Russian officers said it was because their chief was 'busy' (Reuters photo)

Russian defence minister in snub to NATO military chief Clark

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev Wednesday snubbed visiting NATO military chief General Wesley Clark, cancelling a planned meeting between the two.

Although Russian officials played down the rebuff, Gen. Clark had wanted to raise a number of issues in person with the Russian defence minister during his brief two-day visit to the Russian capital, NATO sources said.

However, the chief of the Russian defence staff General Anatoly

Kvashnin, denied the Russian side had agreed to a face-to-face meeting between the two men.

"We didn't have anything planned," Gen. Kvashnin told reporters after a brief meeting with Gen. Clark at the defence ministry in central Moscow.

"It was foreseen in the original programme but when the final programme was drawn up it was dropped," he said.

The minister has a packed agenda. He has been ordered by the president (Boris Yeltsin) to

attend the Federation Council where several bills are under examination," said Gen. Kvashnin.

Gen. Clark, the four-star U.S. general who is NATO supreme allied commander-Europe, is due to leave Russia later Wednesday.

He was in Moscow for talks with Russian officials about deepening defence cooperation, notably within the Partnership for Peace which offers closer military cooperation between the Western

defence alliance while stopping short of membership.

Geneva closes Onassis kidnapping case

GENEVA (R) — A Geneva prosecutor has ruled there was no plot to kidnap Athena Roussel, sole heir to the \$3 billion fortune of Greek shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis, the investigating judge said Wednesday.

Prosecutor Jean-Louis Crochet ruled that suspicious acts by Israeli agents who followed and photographed the 13-year-old and her security entourage last year was in fact a "security audit," according to the investigating magistrate, Jacques Delietraz.

Greek trustees of Athena's fortune told a news conference in Athens last November that they had hired private Israeli investigators to secretly

check on her security around her home in western Switzerland and elsewhere.

Athena's father and legal guardian, Frenchman Thierry Roussel who filed a complaint last year, has appealed against the ruling to a higher Geneva court, according to the judge.

Disclosure of the alleged plot, uncovered by Geneva police in February 1997, has brought into the open a bitter legal battle between the flamboyant Roussel and the four other trustees, all Greek, who jointly manage the girl's fortune.

"Crochet has closed the case. He said the file showed that the bizarre behaviour did not consti-

tute preparatory acts to commit a crime, as had been believed," Mr. Delietraz told Reuters.

"The idea was a security audit, but they used disproportionate methods which went beyond an audit," he added. "There were slippages. There were lies."

Dismissal means that international arrest warrants issued by Mr. Delietraz against six Israelis on suspicion of attempted kidnapping and preparatory acts to commit a crime are withdrawn, according to the magistrate. Three suspects — an Israeli, a Swiss and an American — were briefly detained in Geneva and in Milan.

Deposed Cambodian prince says return dependent upon safety

SIEM REAP, Cambodia (AFP) — Deposed Cambodian leader Prince Norodom Ranariddh said Wednesday he would only return permanently when international observers could monitor the safety of his supporters for elections in July.

The prince said after an audience with his father, King Norodom Sihanouk, in this northern city that he was concerned about his supporters.

"It is up to me but I expressed to his majesty, the king, that up to now some countries are worried that I am not back and campaigning. I am not worried about myself, but I have to be worried about my supporters, for their security," he said.

"I am asking that (more) long-time observers be sent ... then I will be able to stay."

Prince Ranariddh, making just his second brief visit home since his ouster last year, said the king supported his request and appealed to other nations, noting that

serious concerns had been raised about political intimidation and violence.

Nearly 100 of the prince's supporters have been murdered since he was ousted, according to human rights workers.

"Observers should be sent as soon as possible, not only to Phnom Penh but also to provinces, districts and communes," the prince said, adding that only with additional monitors could the election be "reasonably free and fair."

He stressed, however, that he was not suggesting a return to 1992-1993 when nearly 20,000 United Nations personnel organised and ran elections that his party narrowly won.

The prince did not say exactly how many observers he thought were necessary, but it was clear he did not feel the current seven U.N. seven observers monitoring the safety of opposition politicians was sufficient. The number of U.N. safety monitors is expected to increase to 15 soon and will be supplied

by an estimated 350 U.N.-coordinated monitors who will be looking specifically at the July 26 polls.

Most of the "short term" monitors are not scheduled to arrive in Cambodia until shortly before July 26.

The international community is pushing for the prince to be allowed to participate in polls but has been slow to pick up on the calls for observers.

Instead, it has put much of its weight behind a Japanese-sponsored peace plan aimed at ensuring the vote is free and fair by allowing the prince to stand in the election.

However, only one step in the four-point plan — a pardon clearing two criminal convictions against the prince by a military court in early March — has yet to be completed.

Prince Ranariddh, who arrived earlier Wednesday and is to return to Bangkok Friday, said the discussions with his father had been very cordial.

"I feel of course very moved about being back

Rwanda to stage first genocide executions

KIGALI (R) — The first 33 Rwandans convicted for the genocide of an estimated 800,000 people in 1994 will be executed in public Friday, state radio said Wednesday.

It said the executions would be carried out at Kigali's soccer stadium and in four provincial towns in the tiny central African country.

"It has been decided that the first 33 genocide convicts will be executed in public this Friday at 10 a.m. (0800 GMT)," radio Rwanda said, quoting a communiqué from a special cabinet meeting held Monday.

"This will act as a lesson to people who do not respect the life of others," it said. The radio broadcast the government's warning against Hutu militiamen "still bent on pursuing genocide."

It said President Pasteur Bizimungu turned down a request for amnesty at Monday's cabinet meeting which also amended the law to allow the executions to be held in public.

The means of execution and the identity of those to be killed were not immediately known.

Rwanda began its genocide trials in December 1996 and has condemned scores of people to death for playing active parts in the three-month genocide by Hutu extremists.

An estimated 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the genocide, which ended when the former Hutu government was driven from power by rebel forces.

Rwanda's prisons are packed with about 130,000 prisoners — overwhelmingly Hutus — awaiting trial for the genocide.

The radio said originally 34 genocide convicts were due to be executed but one had died in prison.

It listed the five execution sites as Nyamirambo soccer stadium in Kigali, Nyamata in Kigali province, Murambi in northeastern Umutara, Gikongoro in the south and Cyasankamba in the east.

Official sources said the public executions were meant to discourage the ongoing armed Hutu insurgency.

Survivors have complained about the slow pace at which both Rwanda's judiciary and the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda, based in Tanzania, are processing the trials of genocide suspects.

Britain defends decision to accept Georgian nuclear material

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Labour government Wednesday sought to justify its decision to accept enriched uranium from Georgia for reprocessing in Scotland as a means of preventing it falling into the wrong hands.

Faced with a public outcry from environmentalists and some politicians, over the deal and the secrecy surrounding it, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said there would be no more consignments of the kind.

He told BBC radio: "We understand that this is the last such consignment around the countries of the former Soviet Union, and this is the end of the story."

A total of 5.1 kilos of uranium, including 800 grammes of waste fuel, will be flown in American transport aircraft from the ex-Soviet state on April 27 to the Dounreay nuclear complex in Scotland.

Media reports of the "secret deal" between Britain and U.S. President Bill Clinton to take the material have led to calls on Prime Minister Tony Blair to pledge that "Britain will not be the final repository for Georgian nuclear waste or nuclear waste from any other country."

Alex Salmon, the Scottish National Party leader, accused Mr. Blair of "prostituting Scotland as a world nuclear dustbin to curry favour with the Clinton administration."

A number of Labour MPs were also reported to have expressed concern about Britain being seen as a "soft touch" for the dumping of nuclear waste.

But Mr. Cook justified the government's decision to reprocess the uranium as intended to prevent it falling into the wrong hands.

He said the United States was accepting some 600 kgs from former states of the Soviet Union. "We (Britain) are accepting in this case five kilos," he added.

Mr. Cook said the material in question was not highly radioactive, but was highly explosive and of weapons grade material.

It was in a country which had a major civil war. "It cannot for safety be left where it is at risk. If it went into wrong hands, and Georgia is not that far away from the Middle East, then it can pose a real danger," he added.

"If we're looking at the risk, then if this material was to be used in a nuclear weapon in the Middle East, Britain and Europe would get far more than one per cent of the radioactive fall-out, so taking one per cent (of the material) isn't a bad bargain from our point of view."

Private experts have said that the material in the Tbilisi reactor could be used by a skilled atomic bomb maker to make a one-kilotonne nuclear device — equivalent to 1,000 tonnes of dynamite.

Burundi says 34 die in rebel clashes

BUJUMBURA (R) — At least 34 people were killed in Burundi late last week during an army operation south of Bujumbura, a defence ministry spokesman said Wednesday.

Army spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Nihizi said 30 rebels, two soldiers and two civilians were killed in a two-day operation which began last Thursday in the Dama River valley, 60 kilometres south of the capital.

"The military was on patrol and ran into a group of assailants. There was an exchange of fire and 30 rebels and two of our soldiers were killed," Lt. Col. Nihizi said, adding that the two civilians killed had been patrolling the area with troops.

The report could not be independently confirmed. More than 150,000 people have been killed in Burundi since the assassination of the country's first democratically elected president in 1993 sparked a low-scale civil war between Tutsi troops and Hutu rebels.

Lt. Col. Nihizi said soldiers had recovered five Kalashnikov rifles in the operation, and added the area had been calm since.

He said rebels were still entrenched in Bujumbura-Rurale — the province surrounding the capital — but the army had not recently made contact with them.

Aid workers and local officials say 20,000 civilians are displaced in Isale Commune, about 20 kilometres east of Bujumbura, due to rebel activity in the area.

Lt. Col. Nihizi said another large group of civilians had been displaced in Muhimbii Commune, about 20 kilometres northeast of the capital, but said he had no other details.

Three more factories — some still functioning — were also found in the area. Further south in the town of Kutkai, five old and abandoned refineries were found by another army patrol.

The paper said the refineries were uncovered between March 23 and April 7.

Army uncovers hidden heroin factories in Golden Triangle

YANGON (AFP) — Myanmar army units on "mopping up operations" in the Golden Triangle region of northeast Shan State have uncovered nine secret heroin refineries, reports said Wednesday.

The state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper said troops stumbled across one clandestine drug factory

near Muse township on the Sino-Myanmar border, about 720 kilometres northeast of Yangon.

The report said they seized one kilogramme of heroin, 140 kilogrammes of opium, 22.5 kilogrammes of raw opium and hundreds of gallons of chemicals used to refine opium into heroin.

Three more factories — some still functioning — were also found in the area.

Further south in the town of Kutkai, five old and abandoned refineries were found by another army patrol.

The paper said the refineries were uncovered between March 23 and April 7.



Indonesian riot police clash with University in Jatininggar. At least 100 were injured and the government and police denounced the government and police.

Indonesian warnings a

JAKARTA (AFP) — Thousands of Indonesian students have threatened to repeat warnings from the authorities against keeping up protest rallies across the country, as 15,000 people were hurt in a clash in Jakarta last Wednesday.

And their ranks are being swelled by increasing numbers of people demanding urgent economic and political reforms since the almost daily clashes started in February.

Tuesday students and army forces clashed along with students and a security unit injured in fighting outside Bandung Islamic University in West Java as the authorities tried to stop students from marching on the streets, the report said.

The clash in Bandung, 180 kilometres east of Jakarta, followed a gathering of up to 1,000 students from various universities at the Islamic University, the Kompas daily said.

About 2,000 students also gathered at the Bandung Institute of Technology for an anti-violence demonstration.

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Workshop to examine urban housing

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman-based regional U.N. Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) is organising a four-day workshop in Amman starting on April 27 to tackle questions related to housing prospects and urban indicators in the Arab World.

The meeting, to be attended by 50 delegates from 16 Arab countries, will be hosted by the Housing and

Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), which will offer technical support for training Arab personnel involved in this field. HUDC Director General Yousef Hiyasat noted that the workshop is being held at a time when countries in the developing world lack the information about housing-related subjects needed to develop effective urban policies.

Most cities, especially those in the developing world, lack information about the manner in which they can address problems connected with housing and housing programmes, he said. For this reason, Mr. Hiyasat added, Habitat has created a special "urban development programme" to provide indications on future expectations.

The upcoming workshop aims at training workers involved in urban development to prepare indicators and examine trends of urban housing in the Arab World and formulate the strategies needed at the local, national and regional levels, according to Mr. Hiyasat. He said the delegates will discuss five urban indicators, focusing attention on

socio-economic development, infrastructure, transport, ecology management and local government. The countries represented in the coming meeting are: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Palestine, Morocco, Iraq, Bahrain, Syria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Sudan, Yemen, Mauritania, Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon.

Seminar to discuss impact of stalemate in peace process on Jordan's tourism industry

AMMAN (J.T.) — The impact of the one-year stalemate in the peace process on Jordan's tourism industry will be among the issues to be tackled by a seminar on "Tourism in Jordan: Challenges and Future Perspectives," to be held next week at the Amman Pri-

vate University (APU). The two-day seminar, which is scheduled to be opened by Tourism Minister Akel Biltaji on Saturday, will also deal with the particular development needs of different kinds of tourism, such as medical, religious and sport tourism.

A score of speakers from local private and public sector institutions involved in tourism will "explore ways to best develop, promote and market Jordan's natural riches," said Suleiman Lawzi, dean of the Faculty of Economics at APU. "In the last few years, the

number of Muslim tourists from Malaysia, Indonesia and Iran has sharply increased, highlighting the high potential of religious tourism to the Kingdom," Dr. Lawzi added. More than 50 holy sites are scattered throughout the Kingdom. Representatives from the

Jordan Tourism Board, the ministries of planning, foreign affairs, and higher education, as well as the Royal Scientific Society, Jordanian and private and public universities will present papers during the seminar.



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Rubin says World Bank must cut costs, raise income

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The World Bank must act quickly to cut its costs and increase its income if it is to have the financing to continue helping the neediest developing countries, U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin has said.

"We seek a more efficient bank, producing better results on the ground and at lower cost," Mr. Rubin told the IMF and World Bank Development Committee, which deals with transfer of funds from the world's rich to poor countries.

"There must be more selective use of Bank resources, with greater concentration on those activities which the bank does best," he said.

The bank's net income is falling because it is earning less on the loans it makes due to low interest rates.

Net income in the year to June 1997 totalled \$1.28 billion, but in the six months to December it was only \$449 million, less than half the previous full year's total.

In addition, Mr. Rubin said, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) should increase its loan charges because current rates, which are lower than those charged by regional development banks, are actually costing it money because they do not even cover administrative costs.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 22/04/1998

FAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	FAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
350,000	251,000	ARAB BANK	14.2	1.15	16	8420	2924470	345.00	348.00	3.00+
2,340	1,660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	14.3	3.98	7	2275	4004	1.79	1.76	-0.03-
3,540	1,250	BANK OF JORDAN	4.1	0.00	3	750	995	1.35	1.30	-0.05-
5,990	4,660	THE HOUSING BK.	16.2	3.48	2	1500	8625	5.99	5.75	-0.24-
4,180	1,790	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	9	0.00	7	22390	40754	1.83	1.84	0.01+
920	590	JOR. CULP BANK	4.0	10.45	8	5250	3528	0.67	0.67	-
4,180	2,600	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	39.6	2.56	1	3000	7800	2.60	2.60	-
2,780	2,800	ARAB JOR. INV. BK. / NEW	2	0.00	1	1000	2600	2.65	2.60	-0.05-
4,020	1,750	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.7	0.00	6	3500	6458	1.84	1.86	0.02+
3,900	1,750	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK	10.9	0.00	3	221	378	1.75	1.70	-0.05-
2,350	1,510	JOR. INV. FIN. BANK / NEW	8	0.00	1	50	82	1.62	1.63	0.01+
1,400	800	SEIT. AL-MAL (SEITRA)	6	16.85	6	1550	1368	0.85	0.89	0.04+
BANK SECTOR TOTALS										
			INDEX: 243.93	%CHG: -0.04			61	49908	3001060	
1,350	900	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	9.1	0.00	4	125000	125000	1.04	1.00	-0.04-
2,400	1,590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	6.0	11.74	3	6250	13383	2.16	2.13	-0.03-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS										
			INDEX: 122.12	%CHG: -0.32			7	131250	138383	
2,240	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.6	5.07	21	9290	20333	2.18	2.17	-0.01-
4,030	1,320	IRBID ELECTRICITY	14.6	4.24	1	150	354	2.25	2.36	0.11+
1,550	960	NATL. PORTFOLIO	42.3	0.00	10	5900	6254	1.07	1.06	-0.01-
1,590	360	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	9	0.00	2	750	750	1.37	1.37	-
1,480	1,120	MID. EAST HOTELS	17.4	1.18	12	38750	44175	1.18	1.14	-0.04-
4,600	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDDC.	10.1	1.98	12	100500	402100	4.20	4.05	-0.15-
1,830	1,450	UNIFIED CO.	8.9	7.10	52	15450	23693	1.57	1.55	-0.02-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS										
			INDEX: 117.69	%CHG: -1.11			104	170790	496988	
1,160	960	ATTACHMENT	9	0.00	1	1200	1320	1.10	1.10	-
4,450	2,690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	16.7	3.91	20	10904	30800	2.89	2.78	-0.08-
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.7	8.08	27	18521	203492	10.95	11.00	0.05+
2,150	1,100	INDUSTRIAL CORP. / AGR.	9	0.00	2	5000	6003	1.22	1.20	-0.02-
8,350	2,800	JOR. ROADS. INDS.	8.3	3.16	1	10000	63200	6.32	6.32	-
5,740	3,440	ARAB PHARM. / MANF.	15.2	3.63	46	12285	68080	5.59	5.51	-0.08-
8,540	5,000	ARAB CEM. / DISTRIB.	21.5	4.29	2	100	700	7.33	7.00	-0.33-
3,420	2,220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	21.2	8.71	9	3017	8644	2.86	2.87	0.01+
1,570	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	16.6	0.00	3	2800	1372	0.49	0.49	-
1,110	670	ARAB PAPER CORP. / TRD.	23.2	0.00	1	250	190	0.76	0.76	-
1,770	370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	31	35450	14182	0.41	0.40	-0.01-
5,690	500	JOR. ROADS. INDS.	8.3	3.16	1	10000	63200	6.32	6.32	-
2,240	1,360	UNIV. CHEM. INDS.	14.7	5.55	10	1600	2320	1.43	1.44	0.01+
3,000	920	NATL. CABLE WIRE. / HFAC	28.4	0.00	1	250	295	1.20	1.18	-0.02-
1,790	530	JOR. SULPHO. CHEM.	11.4	0.00	7	4000	2403	0.61	0.60	-0.01-
1,540	810	UNIV. MODN. INDS.	14.0	6.82	9	2880	2555	0.90	0.88	-0.02-
1,200	680	JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	9.3	14.49	3	650	449	0.69	0.69	-
1,010	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	13.7	10.51	2	600	49	1.02	0.97	-0.05-
1,790	1,290	EL. / EAY READY WEAR	48.2	0.00	2	600	49	1.02	1.02	-
1,290	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	7.0	0.00	53	62018	79452	1.28	1.27	-0.01-
1,120	860	UNION CR. & VEG.	10.5	0.00	6	4600	4730	1.05	1.05	-
1,860	660	JORDAN STEEL	8.8	8.86	1	60	40	0.63	0.63	-
1,790	570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.3	16.95	17	51250	30238	0.59	0.59	-
1,100	720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	53.2	0.00	3	460	446	1.00	0.97	-0.03-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS										
			INDEX: 108.90	%CHG: -0.62			258	228090	521975	
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 170.74	%CHG: -0.29			430	580036	4158404	

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- 19th President
- Chales
- Fail utterly
- Chicago airport
- On his waves
- Very unusual
- Singer/actor who co-starred on "Dallas"
- King of comedy
- Popeye's Clive
- Felt regret
- Torn or
- Benedict
- Setup punches
- Stolz of "Mask"
- Presents an opposing case
- Clues
- Avoid detection
- Ballet bend
- Any time now
- Ethereal
- Western ties
- Monster of the Mojave
- Garden of
- "This ... Man"
- Haman
- Concrete
- ingredient
- Poet Dove
- Bubble masses
- Grown-ups
- Outline
- Larga antelope
- Celebration
- Original name of 17A
- Vivacity
- Orchestra member
- Uncanny
- Transmit
- Williams and Koppel
- Film spoils

DOWN

- Holiday chuckle
- Nautical call
- Two-masted sailing vessel
- Segment of history
- Jaw the edge of
- Lawn tools
- Suckered
- Hive builder
- Original name of 24D
- "La roi d'ys"
- Spoken
- Hang in the balance
- Give's name of 17A
- Eliminate
- "Meet Ma in St. Louis"
- Lake Geneva
- spa
- Spanish cowboy's larlat
- Wall Disney's middle name
- Suns too much
- Ms. Degeneres
- Din
- Gen. ... Powell
- Make into law
- Speakers' platforms
- Most likely success
- Ramble
- Watch kids
- Fossil fuel
- Ice on the move
- Grows older
- Broad valley
- Bat
- Mongolia
- Stick with a stick
- "Pretty Woman"
- Singing
- Hawaken
- guitars, bristly
- "Honest"
- politician
- Spike or Pinky

Peanuts



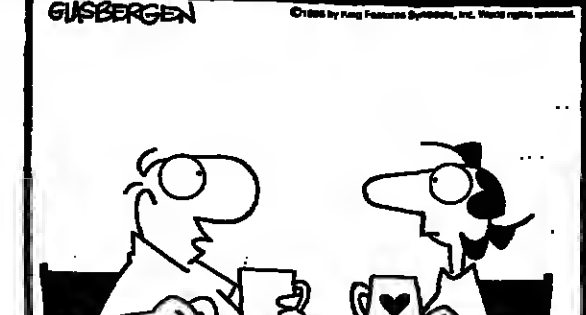
Andy Capp



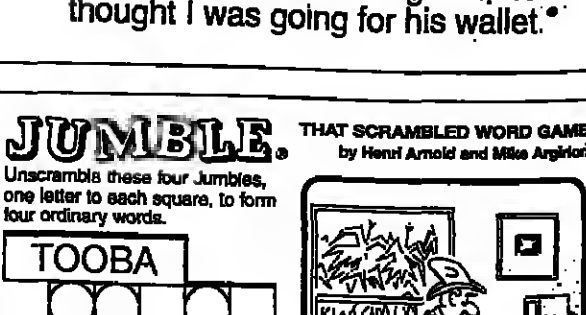
Mutt'n' Jeff



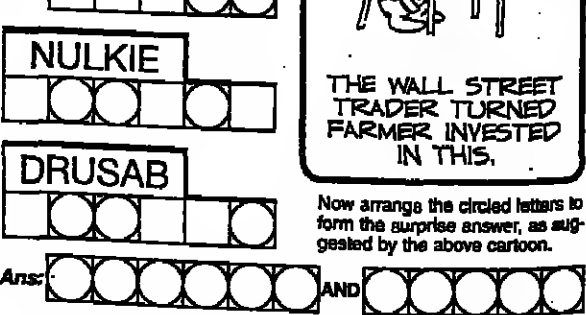
THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



THE WALL STREET TRADER



Business

Daily
A review

Housing
largest

THE GENERAL ...
Bank has approved ...
to become ...
JD50 million ...
increase makes the ...
Jordanian bank ...
the general assembly ...
of dividends ...
rate of 20 per cent.

Board chairman ...
general assembly ...
tax profit last year ...
of 92 per cent ...
JD10.4 million ...
1997. The total of the ...
of that year ...
18.9 per cent ...
equity also went ...
JD12 million ...
In other financial ...
deposits reached ...
of last year ...
the end of 1996 ...
JD70.3 million ...
credits extended ...
amounted to ...
standing balance ...
being JD65.7 million ...
1996.

The Housing Bank ...
to capture a dominant ...
local banking market ...
increasing its share ...
market in construction ...
Quarter Dweik, general ...
Mr. Dweik told Reuters ...
best is corporate ...
activities in 1995 as part ...
push in the local market ...
hoped to raise its market ...
JD8 billion ...
bank deposits in Jordan ...

REUTERS
The Business

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP
US Dollar	1.0000	1.9362	0.6936
DE Mark	0.5578	1.0000	0.6366
GB Sterling	1.5737	3.0031	1.0000
CH Franc	0.6734	1.2066	0.7563
JP Yen	0.0076	1.3704	0.0094
CA Dollar	0.6098	1.2916	0.7123
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0138	0.0021
NL Guilder	0.4954	88.77	0.2121
FR Franc	0.1664	0.2982	0.2029

Energy

Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	13.90	14.09
WTI	15.92	15.83
Bosny	13.90	14.09
Dubai	12.75	12.85
UL Gas	158.00	158.00

JDD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1864	1.1913
DE Mark	0.3952	0.3972
CH Franc	0.4771	0.4795
FR Franc	0.1179	0.1185
JP Yen	0.5384	0.5411
NL Guilder	0.3511	0.3529
IT Lira	0.2999	0.3019

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Housing Bank becomes Jordan's largest bank in terms of capital

**** THE GENERAL** assembly of the Housing Bank has approved doubling the bank's capital to become JD100 million by capitalising JD50 million of the reserve which comprised premiums collected from issuing shares. This increase makes the Housing Bank the largest Jordanian bank in terms of capital. In addition, the general assembly approved the distribution of dividends to shareholders at the rate of 20 per cent.

Board chairman Zuhair Khoury told the general assembly that the bank boosted pre-tax profit last year by around JD9.6 million, or 92 per cent, as the amount rose from JD10.4 million in 1996 to JD20 million in 1997. The total of the balance sheet at the end of that year amounted to JD1,350.6 million, 18.9 per cent higher than the 1996 total which stood at JD1,136.2 million. Shareholders equity also went up from JD131 million to JD212 million at the end of 1997.

In other financial results, the bank's total deposits reached JD987.9 million at the end of last year compared to JD917.6 million at the end of 1996. The increase amounted to JD70.3 million or 7.7 per cent. Loans and credits extended by the bank during 1997 amounted to JD276.5 million with the outstanding balance at the end of December being JD657.9 million (JD648.3 million in 1996).

The Housing Bank said last week it aimed to capture a dominant market share in the local banking market. "We are focusing on increasing our share in the Jordanian banking market in commercial activities," said Abdul Qader Dweik, general manager of the bank.

Mr. Dweik told Reuters the bank wanted to boost its corporate lending and commercial activities in 1998 as part of an aggressive push in the local market. Bank officials said it hoped to raise its market share of an estimated JD8 billion (\$11.3 billion) worth of private bank deposits in Jordan to 20 per cent in

1998, to rank second after Arab Bank. It plans to push its share of total loans extended by the banking sector to 17.1 per cent from its current 16 per cent from its current 16 per cent, forecasting JD212 million in new loans this year. Bank officials said it was leading a \$36 million local banking syndicated short-term facility to the country's only mobile operator Jordan Mobile Telephone Services (Fastlink).

The bank was optimistic it would capture the lion's share of the project financing market this year, despite a sluggish economic activity hit by regional uncertainty. Mr. Dweik said the bank forecast its 1998 operational revenues would grow by 42 per cent while net operational profits would rise 167 per cent, underpinned by streamlining of operations and improved commercial business.

He forecast pre-tax profits to reach JD39.7 million in 1998 from around JD20 million last year. Mr. Dweik said the bank posted JD11.57 million in pre-tax profits alone in the first three months of 1998, mainly through cost-cutting measures it had implemented as part of a major administrative restructuring.

The capital hike left Kuwait as the largest shareholder with 18.7 per cent while Qatar and Oman maintained equal six per cent stakes while Iran's will fell by half to three per cent. Saudi investor Khaled Ben Mahfouz substantially increased his holding to 16.3 per cent stake from a minor 1.3 per cent, acquiring two seats in a newly constituted 13-member board. Libyan Arab Foreign Bank, a new investor, acquired a 15 per cent equity stake.

The bank has become more assertive since a law was passed last year abolishing restrictions on its commercial lending, allowing it to shift its strategic focus to comprehensive banking away from its original real estate niche (Al Aswaaq + Ad Dustour).

HOROSCOPE
FORECAST FOR
THURSDAY,
APRIL 23, 1998

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You tend to buy things just because you like them, without even looking at the cost. Today, an older woman will tell you not to do that, and point out the best deals for your money. You're not usually interested in that sort of conversation, but this time you should listen.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're forceful and dynamic, and you're letting it be known what you want and need. That gives other people the opportunity to provide it, and some of them would love to do exactly that.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Take advice from somebody who wants the best for you. In fact, it would be smart to ask for it in advance. Just walk right up to the person who wants to run your life and ask what to do next.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) There's going to be a test tonight or tomorrow, and you're going to have to prove you know what you're talking about. If you don't have any experience, don't pretend that you do.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) This morning is an excellent time to buy gifts. There are several people in your life who have gone out of their way to help, and have always applauded your performances and laughed at your jokes. You need to repay them for their generosity.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You continue to be in the spotlight. There have been decisions to make lately, and you've done an excellent job in steering your team through the changes.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Look for another busy day, with great rewards. A lot of those will be emotional, but some will be financial. Take yourself and your partner out dancing to celebrate.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're strongly attracted to a person who thinks you're marvelous. That's a lot of fun, but it could interfere with your duties. If you can take work home with you, you don't have a thing to worry about. You'll be in the mood to work late into the night.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your living environment is disrupted this morning, in a pleasant way. The trouble isn't a lack of love. It's the abundance of it. This evening, however, your sweetheart won't be quite so snuggly.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your best time for taking on major challenges is first thing this morning. Don't put them off because they won't get any easier. Just the opposite is more likely. Your intuition is good in the morning, too. You can take leap of faith and have a better-than-average chance of landing safely.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Things seem to be going more slowly than you'd like. That's OK. You needed time to think. Now you'll be assimilating information more quickly. By this evening, you'll start find the data you need to complete the task at hand. Proceed with caution and avoid an expensive mistake.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're strong, confident and good looking. Your intuition is excellent. You can figure out how to do just about anything you want. Now, what do you want? It's as if you're being granted three wishes, but these wishes will come true through your own imagination and hard work.

HOROSCOPE
FORECAST FOR
FRIDAY,
APRIL 24, 1998

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're more confident than usual. In fact, your attitude might border on cockiness. Don't follow your first impulse, especially when it comes to divulging information. You feel like you can speak freely, but that's not a good idea.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're under pressure, but that's OK. You're finishing up a lot of overdue items as a result. This is the perfect time of year for you to do exactly that. Clean out the garage and the attic while you're at it.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You and your team are feeling red-hot. You've gone through tough situations together, and there are more in the future. But for now, things are looking rosy. That's all the excuse you need to celebrate this evening.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) The person you most respect and perhaps even fear is watching you like a hawk. This may seem like criticism, but actually he or she just wants to teach you how to do the job exactly right. If you can handle that, you could get a raise in pay.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You're in a frisky mood today. That could cause a problem. An older person, possibly a boss or teacher, wants you to stick to the task at hand. You're interested in doing just about anything else. Have you got big plans for the weekend? If you haven't yet, you will by the time the day's over.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This would be a good day to take out a loan. Talk to the people with the money and present your case. They'll ask questions, of course. You need to have the answers ready. Provide more answers than they even know they need. And hold out for a lower interest rate.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You attention will be drawn to a very attractive person — one who's on the wild side. That OK. You probably believe you can tame this person. That's highly unlikely, but you could join forces for a thrilling ride. Get started on it first thing this morning.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The workload is intense, but your energy level is high. The tension might be high also. See if you can get volunteers to help. You don't have money to pay, so you'll have to come up with some other incentive. No problem. You have a knack for talking people into doing what you want.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Conditions continue to push you to the top in your education or career. You're getting a shove in the right direction from someone who cares about you.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You'd rather be home today than just about anywhere else. It looks like there's a lot of activity going on. You could be getting ready to take a trip, or maybe a long-lost loved one has shown up unexpectedly.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're best with machines and probably worst at emotional issues. Today you might get to deal with both. Focus on fixing an item you know you can figure out.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There's money coming in and going out. It's up to you to make sure you wind up with a profit. You have to pay the bills, of course.

Government has no plans to liquidate troubled Spinning and Weaving Company

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government has no plans to liquidate the debt-ridden Spinning and Weaving Company (SWC) whose board of directors was dissolved last week, Louay Mismar, the comptroller of companies at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, said Wednesday.

He said the committee appointed by the Minister of industry and trade last week to run the company facing over JD8 million in debts would "try to restructure" the SWC with a paid up capital of JD10 million and decide on a long-term solution.

The appointment of the committee raised speculation among business circles that the government was considering plans to liquidate the public shareholding company.

"We do not intend to liquidate the company and I believe that none of any upcoming solution will hurt

the employees," said Mr. Mismar, head of the government-appointed committee. "But it takes time to decide on the solution as we are studying the overall situation."

The committee would help secure needed liquidity to run the factory with the maximum production capacity as part of restructuring plans, he explained.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade decided earlier this month to dissolve the board of directors of the company which was hit by administrative and financial problems.

A court is still looking into charges of alleged embezzlement of millions of dinars by several former officials, a move that has harmed the SWC's performance.

Last week, the general association of workers in the spinning, weaving, and clothing industry asked the government to intervene to prevent the liquidation of the company and to safeguard the rights of shareholders and workers to avoid

swelling the ranks of the unemployed.

The association said mismanagement was the main reason for the company's troubles and claimed some "circles" were planning to take over the SWC at extremely low prices.

By the end of last year, the company had posted an accumulated loss of JD8 million while total debts stood at JD12 million. The shareholders' equity reached JD658.483 at the end of 1997.

The association recommended forming a committee to manage the company for three years and to restructure its finances through partial or full debts capitalisation and rescheduling the rest without interest.

It also recommended providing a working capital to enable the plant to continue operations and production and stressed that the company was expected to continue growing and prospering as a result of the increasing demand on its high-quality and low-cost products.

REUTERS • REUTERS •
The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Prices as at 22/04/98 18:13

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.7929	0.8975	1.4860	130.77	1.4314	1772.00	2.0184	6.0105	
DE Mark	0.5678	1.0000	0.3329	0.2823	72.84	0.7983	988.18	1.1261	3.3628
GB Sterling	1.6737	3.0011	1.0000	2.4890	216.56	2.3967	2965.62	3.3788	10.0892
CH Franc	0.6734	120.66	0.4019	87.94	0.9636	1192.62	135.88	4.0463	
JP Yen	0.0076	1.3704	0.4564	1.1348	1.0942	13.64	154.28	4.5942	
CA Dollar	0.6986	1.2916	0.4225	1.0566	1.09	1270.80	1.4661	4.3255	
IT Lira	0.0005	1.0108	0.3396	0.0837	1357.04	0.8071	11.38	3.3886	
NL Guilder	0.4954	88.77	0.2956	73.56	64.71	0.7089	877.66	2.9782	
FR Franc	0.1664	0.2982	0.0993	24.7031	21.73	0.2381	33.68	33.5800	

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7504	0.3770	3.6395	0.3061	3.6729	1526.00	3.4100
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	0.2897	0.8317	0.1333	0.4304	0.1804	2156.92	4.8096
Saudi Riyal	0.2685	0.1890	1.0000	0.1065	0.87	0.0814	0.38	406.62	0.9092
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9400	1.0000	9.65	0.8094	9.74	4046.09	9.0481
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1948	1.0305	1.0305	1.0000	0.0838	1.01	419.01	0.9369
Kuwait Dinar	3.2772	2.3236	12.2908	1.2356	11.93	12.04	4987.71	0.9369	
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0126	0.9909	0.0831	1.01	419.01	0.9369
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4649	2.4593	0.2472	2.3866	0.2001	2.4085	2.2361	
Egyptian	0.2933	0.2079	1.0958	0.1106	1.0673	0.0895	1.0771	447.21	

Energy

Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	13.80	14.09
W. Texas	18.92	18.63
Bonny	13.80	14.09
Dubai	12.75	12.85
UL Gas	158.00	158.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2686	0.4784	0.15931	0.39617	34.887
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48835	0.16267	0.40453	35.6227
KW Dinar	3.2772	5.87889	1.9581	4.86855	428.816
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.75737	1.58479	3.94166	347.102
CY Pound	1.8994	3.4056	1.1342	2.8202	248.328

JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1054	1.1913
DE Mark	0.3962	0.3972
CH Franc	0.4771	0.4795
FR Franc	0.1179	0.1186
JP Yen	0.0384	0.0411
NL Guilder	0.3611	0.3629
IT Lira	0.3395	0.4019

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Libor Fixing

Period	1 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 12
Currency	Month	Months	Year
USD	5.6719	5.7422	5.8125
GBP	7.4115	7.4948	7.4996
JPY	0.6583	0.7292	0.7604
DEM	3.8248	3.7395	3.8333
FRF	3.5113	1.4896	1.6250
CHF	1.3542	1.6211	1.7344
ITL	5.4650	6.1600	4.5700

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SPORTS IN BRIEF

FA lift drugs ban on Stuart

LONDON (AFP) — Former England under-21 defender Jamie Stuart on Wednesday was given the go-ahead to restart his career after the Football Association (FA) lifted a ban imposed for failing a drugs test. Stuart has been out of the game for six months after being released by English First Division club Charlton after he tested positive for cocaine and marijuana, but he now has the chance to make a lucrative free transfer move. Stuart will still have to face a series of random drugs tests over the course of the next two years and was officially warned by the FA about his future conduct.

Boston will not ban Kenyans

BOSTON (AFP) — Eight consecutive victories by Kenyan men at the Boston Marathon will not push the 102-year-old race into restricting international runners to boost United States hopefuls. Moses Tanui won the men's title here Monday and Ethiopia's Fatuma Roba took the women's title. No American man has won here since 1983 and no U.S. woman has taken the title since 1985. The Boulder Bolder, a 10-kilometre event in Colorado, is restricting competition to three runners from any nation except for U.S. athletes and other races offer prizes for U.S. efforts but not foreign runners. That will not happen here, said David D'Alessandro, president of the financial services company which serves as the main Boston Marathon sponsor. "Are you a world-class event or an American event?" he said.

Vieri hits out at Italy's critics

PARMA (AFP) — Too many people are writing off Italy's chances of winning the World Cup, says angry striker Christian Vieri. The Atletico Madrid ace, top scorer in the Spanish League, has rounded on the critics here who think that Italy are in for an unpleasant surprise at France '98 after struggling to qualify. "I see too much scepticism around over what this national side is capable of doing," he said. "And it's all wrong. I reckon this is going to be Italy's World Cup. And do you know why? Because we're a tighter, more mature group than in the past. And we've got faith in our coach."

Chinese World Cup web site launched

HONG KONG (AFP) — The China Internet Corporation (CIC) on Wednesday launched the first Chinese-language web site on the 1998 football World Cup. The site gives soccer fans access to a huge data base, prepared by Agence France-Presse (AFP), profiling every team, coach, player and game ever played since the tournament began in 1930. CIC director of product management Vicky Hung said. The site (<http://www.worldcup98.china.com>) will also provide AFP's real-time coverage of news and results from this summer's tournament in France.

Rusedski blasts ATP coaching experiment

MONTE CARLO (AFP) — Britain's Greg Rusedski branded as rubbish on Wednesday an ATP Tour experiment with on-court coaching which will be continued at next week's tournament in Munich.

"It's absolute rubbish," said the Canadian-born Briton after taking a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 second-round defeat to unseeded German tennis icon Boris Becker.

"This sport has been without coaches. It will not seem like tennis. The only reason they are doing it is to try and make the sport more popular in the U.S. It's not lacking any spectators in Europe."

Rusedski's complaints stem from a decision taken last month by the by the powerful ATP Tour Players Council.

Victoria Park in Hong Kong a fortnight ago served as the first venue for a limited 1998 trial of Davis Cup-style on-court strategy sessions, allowed to take place after the first and second sets.

Under the strict guidelines — among the first major shakeup in tennis since the tiebreak scoring system was introduced in the 1970s — coaches are allowed to consult with their players for two minutes at the end of each set.

The experiment will in effect at next week's BMW Open in Munich and at Atlanta, Gstaad and Los Angeles in July.

Coaches will be designated by players before the tournament and will come down from the stands for the specified consultations.

Andre Agassi, whose sense of showmanship is well-known, would like to see a further wrinkle. He believes that a good idea should be taken even further — by wiring the coaches for sound and broadcasting the strategy sessions as a part of television coverage.

"The people at home need to know what the player is being told," said the most flamboyant current name in the game. "I think the coaches need to have press conferences and answer for the things they've said. I'm serious."

Players, tournament directors and administrators feel that the new wrinkle might inject a further touch of intrigue into the men's game, which appears to be losing ground to the teenaged rivalries which are lighting up the women's game.

Rusedski, coached by Briton Tony Picard, said he would use his mentor, "but tennis has always been a one-on-one sport." "I find it all a little bit strange. It's not tennis," he said.

Becker, also something of a traditionalist, has a more open mind about the plan.

"They're trying to make a lot of changes in tennis recently — and some are not necessary."

"Two or three years ago they wanted to take away the second serve. Tennis is much more complicated. Tennis is a very old sport. Obviously you have to make some changes, but you don't have to change the whole thing. It has survived us."

The German said that he would not mind having coaches on the bench along with the player. "We have communication with coaches, even though they're on the sidelines."

"Why just after each set? It could make tennis altogether better because players could come back once they lose their minds (during a match)."

Becker beats Rusedski for 3rd round place at Monte Carlo

MONTE CARLO (AFP) — Boris Becker, still searching for the first claycourt title of his brilliant career, stepped smartly into the third round of the \$2.45 million Monte Carlo Open Wednesday, beating Briton Greg Rusedski 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Becker's 49 career titles have all come everywhere but on the "dirt." The 30-year-old German has missed out here on three occasions, losing finals in 1989, 1991 and 1995.

Becker took a 4-2 lead in the third set, smashing over a winner against third-seeded Rusedski.

The German held for 5-2 and served out the win after a few hiccups.

Becker suffered a minor late lapse, giving Rusedski a break point in the final game with a mis-hit smash. But the Briton returned the favour with a lob long.

Becker double-faulted for a second break point, saving that error with a backhand volley deep. The German returned wide for a third break chance for Rusedski and drew a scream from the stand when the opportunity was lost.

Becker finally stopped the rot as he won on first match point from Rusedski's backhand into the net after one hour, 53 minutes.

"I don't think I've ever missed so many smashes," said the winner. "As the tournament goes on, it gets more difficult. I play Mark Philippoussis tomorrow, it's another chance to win a match."

While Australian Open holder Petr Korda, the Czech second seed, dispatched South African Wayne Ferreira 6-1, 6-3 to reach the third round and fourth seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov came back to oust Australian Mark Woodforde 4-6, 6-2, 6-2, there was an early upset on Day Three.

Czech Slava Dosedel equalled his career-best showing here by crushing fifth seed Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden in a quick 6-1, 6-0 decision to move into the round of 16.

The Swede had been suffering from a virus and was not even sure that he would take to the court. The win took 48 minutes.

Spanish 12th seed Alberto



Russia's four seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov returns the ball during his match versus Australia's Mark Woodforde in the second round of the Monte Carlo Open. Kafelnikov defeated Woodforde 4-6 6-2 6-2 (Reuters photo)



Germany's Boris Becker looks at the ball as he returns during his match versus Great Britain's Greg Rusedski in the second round of the Monte Carlo open April 22. Becker defeated Rusedski 6-4 3-6 6-3 (Reuters photo)

Berasategui ousted Czech Daniel Vacek 6-0, 7-6 (7/1). Andre Agassi, 21st on the ATP Tour list, was playing top seed Pete Sampras in a second-round contest.

Sampras has never won a match at Monte Carlo and is far from a major threat on clay.

Two-time French Open finalist Agassi is bolstered by confidence from a Tuesday win against Barcelona trophyholder Todd Martin and could derail any Sampras chance of taking back the world No. 1 position with a victory over his compatriot.

Sampras was knocked out of the top spot last month by Chile's Marcelo Rios, who is not playing this week due to an elbow injury.

Korda figures in the rankings mix. If the second seed win 212 more ranking points than Sampras this week — in effect reaching the semifinals — then Korda could take over No. 1.

Rusedski was displeased with his showing. "I'm disappointed with myself for losing. I didn't do the right thing in terms of shots. I just put the ball back and didn't attack."

"I was too defensive in my play. I would have been nice to win and play Mark Philippoussis in the next round."

The Briton added: "I gave him the initiative."

Rusedski said that he will stay in Monte Carlo and train before playing in Munich next week along with Tim Henman.

"I know I can play well on clay. But you have to win matches in order to get confidence. This would have been a nice match to win."

His goal is simple: "I want to win my first match on clay this year. I hope to get on a roll in Munich. It's a quicker court than here."

He said that even though Becker is semi-retired he is always difficult to play.

"He's practising just as much as he did when he was at the top. It's just that he's not playing in as many events. He's hitting a lot of balls and he's tough to play."

Fans rume as World Cup phone lines get swamped

PARIS (AFP) — Desperate football fans throughout Europe were left fuming Wednesday and telephone operators were swamped as France put 110,000 last gasp World Cup tickets on sale.

Supporters from London to Bonn got nothing but the busy signal as they tried to get through as soon as the lines were available at 0600 GMT.

"During the first three hours, France Telecom counted 10 million calls coming in, of which two and a half million were from abroad," said Bruno Travade, director of the French World Cup Organising Committee (CFO).

"That doesn't mean that 10 million people called, because many of them called several times," Travade added.

He insisted that the system was working well and it was only normal that there were some delays in answering the calls or that some callers failed to get through.

In Germany, however, the German Football Federation was saturated with rate calls complaining about the situation.

In Denmark it was equally impossible to get through to the French World Cup Organising Committee (CFO).

"We rang an hour before the tickets were officially due to be put on sale, hoping to be amongst the first, but we could not get through," said one supporter in Copenhagen.

Tele Denmark increased the number of lines to France from the normal 200 to 600 but it made no difference.

"Normally 70 per cent of calls get through to France first time but today that has fallen to only six per cent," said spokesman Benny Dam. "It is very difficult to get through."

In Belgium, telephone operator Belgacom reported 1.64 million calls in the first four hours although intense pressure on the net-

work meant that only half a million of them made it to Paris.

Even people in France were having difficulty trying to find a free line.

France-Info radio station put ten phones on automatic redial and after three hours were still waiting for a reply.

Until Wednesday the booking hotline could only be accessed from within France and callers had to give a French address to which tickets could be sent.

Sixty per cent of the tickets destined for fans had been allocated solely to French supporters.

The CFO agreed to the changes introduced today following threats of legal action from the European Commission.

But the Football

Supporters' Association believe the hotline amounts to nothing more than a public relations exercise by the CFO.

A spokeswoman said: "I just think they are going to try to do the minimum possible to comply with EU regulations to make sure they're not in trouble from that point of view."

Thirty Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) said they would continue their legal attempt to block the distribution of more than half a million World Cup tickets already sold to French residents.

The move comes despite the MEP's failure on Tuesday night to win an injunction which would have suspended the release of the final 110,000 tickets. The MEPs allege the

organising committee had breached European Union single market legislation by allocating the majority of tickets to French residents.

The Court of First Instance in Paris agreed that the MEP's case was admissible but rejected their appeal for the sale of the remaining available tickets to be suspended until it rules in the case.

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Netanyahu on verge of agreement to bring hardliners into coalition

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tried Wednesday to anchor his fragile coalition government more firmly on the political right ahead of a new U.S. push to break the deadlock in the Palestinian peace process.

Officials said negotiations lasting into the early hours of Wednesday morning had nearly sealed an agreement to bring the extreme right-wing Moledet Party into government.

The addition of Moledet's two deputies would boost Netanyahu's majority in parliament — now a minimal one seat in the 120-member chamber since the defection in January of the centrist Geshet Party of former Foreign Minister David Levy.

It would also greatly reinforce the most hardline nationalist camp in the coalition — a central plank of Moledet's 1996 election campaign was a call for the transfer of all Arabs out of Israel and the occupied territories.

The party is fiercely opposed to any further troop withdrawals from the West Bank — a key requirement of signed peace accords and the core requirement of a peace package being pushed by the United States.

Analysts were divided over the aim of Netanyahu's manoeuvre, which came amid two weeks of intense diplomatic activity aimed at reviving the Palestinian peace process after more than a year of deadlock.

U.S. peace envoy Dennis Ross is due in the region Saturday for a new push to gain Israeli approval of a package deal centred on an Israeli withdrawal from another 13 per cent of the West Bank in return for specific Palestinian

the peace process.

Mr. Netanyahu justified his overture to Moledet as designed to strengthen his parliamentary majority "to advance the peace process."

"With the entry of Moledet into the coalition, Netanyahu is trying to calm nervous [Jewish] settlers while dividing the camp of right-wing receptionists in parliament," said political analyst Shmuel Sandler.

According to this view, Mr. Netanyahu's aim is to neutralise a potentially dangerous

portfolio and get a coveted seat on the inner "security cabinet" responsible for overseeing peace negotiations.

But even moderates within Mr. Netanyahu's coalition were openly worried about the move while Palestinians were outraged.

Meir Shetreet, parliamentary whip for Netanyahu's Likud Party and its coalition allies, publicly expressed his opposition to any deal with Moledet, as did the centrist Third Way Party, which has three deputies.

Palestinians saw a further indication that Mr. Netanyahu was determined to resist U.S. and European pressure for greater flexibility in negotiations with the Palestinians.

"I was not optimistic about Netanyahu going through with the troop withdrawals before and I'm even less optimistic now," Ahmad Tibi, an Arab Israeli advisor to Mr. Arafat, told AFP.

Meanwhile, Mr. Netanyahu met with his top ministers Wednesday to discuss the scope of the troop withdrawal Israel would be willing to carry out.

Washington is reportedly insisting Israel cede at least another 13 per cent of the territory while Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet has so far refused to offer more than nine per cent.

Moledet's 96 election campaign was a call for transfer of all Arabs out of Israel and occupied territories

action against armed Islamist militants.

Mr. Ross's mission is to prepare the way for separate meetings in London on May 4 between Mr. Netanyahu, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, possibly to seal a deal.

Mr. Netanyahu is also due to hold his first meeting in a year next Tuesday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who has become increasingly vocal in recent months over the Israeli leader's handling of

travelling a potentially dangerous opponent in preparation for a troop withdrawal deal with the Palestinians and subsequent parliamentary vote on the agreement.

Officials close to the negotiations with Moledet said Mr. Netanyahu was insisting the party agree to abstain in any no confidence vote lodged against the government by far-right deputies to block a peace agreement.

In exchange, Moledet chief Rehavam Zeevi would become a minister without

Lebanon explains rejection of Israeli offer to U.N. permanent members

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bouez summoned ambassadors of the five permanent U.N. Security Council members on Wednesday to defend its rejection of Israel's offer to withdraw from south Lebanon, as called for in a 20-year-old U.N. resolution, provided it obtains security guarantees.

"We want to explain the position of Lebanon which rejected the Israeli proposal," said Mr. Bouez after meeting with ambassadors from Britain, China, France, Russia

and the United States.

The move was part of a joint Lebanese-Syrian diplomatic offensive to defend their rejection of Israel's offer to withdraw from south Lebanon, as called for in a 20-year-old U.N. resolution, provided it obtains security guarantees.

Both Beirut and Damascus, the main power broker in Lebanon where it maintains 35,000 troops, have rejected the proposal, saying U.N.

Security Council Resolution 425 adopted in 1978 calls for unconditional withdrawal.

"The proposal is just to cover up for the internal Israeli protests over the occupation of southern Lebanon and the international protests over the halt at the peace negotiations," said Mr. Bouez.

Resolution 425 "is clear and does not need to be explained. Nobody should change it," he added.

Kingdom's privatisation process sparks nationwide debate

(Continued from page 1)

a 30-year lease basis. Jordan has already taken moves to commercialise state companies such as the debt-burdened state airline, Royal Jordanian (RJ), as a first step to the eventual purchase of substantial stakes by the private sector.

It has issued invitations to international financial and legal advisors for the sale of 40-60 per cent of a new debt-free subsidiary of RJ to a strategic partner and bids are expected by May 4.

The government has embarked on a sell-off of 40 per cent of its stakes in its profitable telecommunications company to a foreign strategic partner in a deal to be concluded by the middle of this year. The move, along with a proposed 33 per cent sale in the Jordan Cement Factories Company, has come under criticism from ordinary Jordanians, not just the traditional opposition.

But not all critics want the government to slow down the process. Some, mainly in the business community, say the government is dragging its feet and could lose opportunities to more attractive emerging markets in former Eastern bloc and Asian countries.

Others say the government, not fully convinced of the idea, lacks a cohesive privatisation agenda with clear priorities. Investors worry that political infighting, combined with a heated public debate may put brakes on the whole process.

They point to the government's handling of the sale of the cement firm shares, of which the government owns 49.5 per cent. Only two weeks ago, after almost two years of indecision, it chose leading Egyptian investment bank EFG Hermes as its financial advisor on the sale.

The government had planned to sell its shares of the company, which enjoys a monopoly until the year 2001, to a strategic foreign investor. But investors said unanimous

rejection by the company's board of directors and strong parliamentary opposition have combined to stop the sale, at least for now.

Bringing in a financial advisor does not necessarily close the door to such a sale, but the Cabinet now appears open to other options.

The parliamentary committee has recommended selling equity to Arab investors, the private sector or company employees.

But a serious debate has emerged on whether a foreign strategic partner is needed for all sectors such as cement and electricity where technology is available and can be purchased, leaving the strategic partner with little to offer in areas of marketing and management.

Many Jordanians fear that privatisation will serve a vehicle for Israeli domination of the country's industrial sector after both countries signed the 1994 peace treaty.

They criticise investment legislation passed last year that removed most restrictions on foreign ownership of public shareholding companies.

In a heated debate last month, the Lower House recommended tough restrictions on the government's privatisation strategy to calm popular fear that it could lead to foreigners holding major stakes in key industries. Forty-eight deputies in the 80-strong House asked the government in a petition not to sell successful state enterprises without consulting them.

Although the recommendations are not binding on the government, they could influence future decisions on major state divestitures.

"The vilification of the process has influenced official thinking," said one official. "Officials will be more reluctant to take bold action. No one likes to be accused of selling off their country to the highest bidder."

Foreign and local investors say the government's resolve

will be tested in the coming months when it chooses between Britain's Cable and Wireless PLC and U.S.-based Southern Bell Corporation (SBC) for the 40 per cent stake in the JTC, the first large-scale sale.

The parliamentary committee expressed reservations about the size of the shares to be offered and who will run the day-to-day affairs of the company despite government assurances that it maintain control of the JTC board.

The government insists that teaming up with a strategic partner in the telecom sector will provide improved service for the customer through large investments and technology transfers. Defending its position, the government has said competition and efficiency would only bring prices down as the experience of many other countries has shown.

"There is no way you can keep up with the rapid pace of telecom if you wait for soft loans from foreign governments," said another official, answering critics who say that the government should not sell off its shares in profitable enterprises.

Some officials and economists say the real question facing Jordan is how successful is privatisation going to be.

They point to the fact that Jordan is located in a region still perceived as politically unstable and where its economic performance, despite its success over the last few years, has still not earned Jordan an investment grade rating.

Investment banks remain sceptical over the attractiveness of opportunities offered by Jordan's privatisation.

The number of financial advisors and potential strategic partners who actually submitted bids for privatisation-related services has shown that interest in Jordan is not paramount at a time when many other regions in the world are offering more lucrative returns for investors.

ICRC, Iraq discuss missing Kuwaitis

BAGHDAD (AP) — The International Committee of the Red Cross is negotiating for access to Iraqi jails as part of the search for Kuwaitis and other foreigners missing since the 1990 Gulf crisis, a Red Cross official said Wednesday.

Manuel Bessler, the ICRC representative here, also said Iraq was excavating mass graves dug by the allied forces for Iraqis killed in the 1991 Gulf war. This, too, may yield clues to the missing, he said.

The ICRC, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, is a worldwide aid and rescue organisation that often has assisted in prisoner exchanges.

Kuwait has said that 600 people — including more than 500 Kuwaitis, more than a dozen Saudis and other foreign nationals — are still unaccounted for since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which set off the Gulf war.

Iraq says some 700 Iraqis went missing in Kuwait or on Gulf war battlefields. Iraq has denied repeatedly that it is holding any Kuwaitis in its jails, despite

reports to the contrary that surface from time to time in Kuwait.

Iraq also has said repeatedly that the Red Cross was free to visit its prisons, but Mr. Bessler maintained that discussions on access were still under way.

"There is an ongoing discussion about ICRC access... But this is not concluded," Mr. Bessler told the Associated Press.

"If we come to an agreement, the access will be to visit all [foreign] detained persons and take care of the detained population in Iraq," he said.

The ICRC traditionally works to make sure prisoners are well-treated. It often carries mail between prisoners and their families and assists in repatriating those who are released.

Mr. Bessler said, only "a few cases" have been resolved so far, adding: "It is a very complex issue, very difficult."

Mr. Bessler also said that Iraq — relying on maps provided by the United States and its allies — have started unearthing sites it believes contain mass graves for information about battlefield dead.

Under the U.N. ceasefire resolutions that ended the war, Iraq is obliged to account for the missing foreigners as well as to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction.

The U.N. Security Council has said that punishing trade sanctions imposed after the invasion will not be lifted until Iraq fulfils its obligations under the resolutions.

Baghdad newspapers on Wednesday carried a statement from the Iraqi foreign ministry that attacked Kuwait for alleged attempts "to politicise the issue of missing Kuwaitis" in a bid to prolong the sanctions.

The statement, attributed to an unnamed spokesman, said Iraq had "dealt with 300 files of missing Kuwaitis... and provided information on 126 others."

It added that Iraq does not consider the missing Kuwaitis as prisoners of war but as people who went missing during the Gulf conflict, saying this was a phenomenon of all wars.

The talks with the ICRC are the latest with Iraq involving prisoners.

To avoid dangers of failed peace process, Jordan pushes for movement on PNA-Israeli track

By Alia A. Toukan

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan, concerned by possible repercussions of the continued deadlock in the peace process, is trying to affirm its role as a regional peace-maker by pushing for movement on the Palestinian-Israeli track, officials and analysts say.

Reminiscent of its active involvement in the eleventh hour talks before reaching the Palestinian-Israeli Hebron accords early last year, Jordan has in the past month stepped up its diplomatic profile in ensuring that the peace process does not collapse.

The Kingdom has a vested interest in seeing the resumption of peace talks between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel and the implementation of the second Israeli troop redeployment from the West Bank, after it has put itself out on a limb by sealing its 1994 peace treaty with the Jewish state.

Jordan, however, is walking a political tightrope in carving out a role for itself while simultaneously not posing a real or perceived threat to the PNA, analysts say.

The Kingdom's attempts at being accepted as a regional peace-broker is part and parcel of its concern that its interests be taken into consideration in any final deal between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Seeking a role as a peace-broker has always been a difficult task as it "evokes regional suspicions and rivalry," as one analyst concedes. Jordan's potential

involvement in a final status deal, whether direct or indirect, has always raised misgivings in some Palestinian circles.

Jordan has officially said

NEWS ANALYSIS

that it will not partake in any final status negotiations. "Jordan has to be considered in the outcome of several final status issues that affect its national security, but will not take part in the actual negotiations," a former senior official told the Jordan Times.

While the Kingdom seeks to ensure that its role in pushing the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks is sufficiently recognised both regionally and internationally, it must also constantly reassure the PNA that it has no political ambitions on the West Bank and in final status negotiations, and is not interested in politically weakening the Palestinians.

A case in point was His Majesty King Hussein's letter to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali last week, in which the Monarch cited local media attempts at sabotaging Jordanian-PNA relations. The letter reiterated Jordan's full recognition of the PNA as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and its wholehearted support for Palestinian national aspirations.

The letter came a day after a formal complaint was sent from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to King Hussein, in which the Palestinian president cited Jordanian media reports, Hamas statements from

Jordan, as well as official statements in relation to the PNA-Hamas dispute over the controversial death of Mohieddin Sharif, officials told the Jordan Times.

What particularly angered the Palestinians was what they saw as Jordan's refusal to support the PNA's version of who was responsible for Sharif's death late last month. Jordanian officials had said that the Kingdom would not interfere in internal Palestinian politics. In this context, King Hussein's letter was targeting the government as much as the local press.

The presence of a five-member Hamas office, which Jordan insists functions solely as a media outlet, has long been a sore point in relations with the PNA and Israel. During the latest internal Palestinian dispute, the PNA was angered by the fact that Jordan did not stop the Hamas office in Jordan from issuing statements.

"For Jordan to play a role in the peace process it needs to be on good terms with everyone, in particular the Palestinians and Israelis," one analyst says, as evidenced in the many Israeli visits to the Kingdom, and Jordanian attempts at coordination with the Palestinians and Egyptians.

Others, however, contend that maintaining good relations with all the players in the arena is a mission impossible.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's visit to Tel Aviv on March 10 was necessary to mend full ties with the Jewish state following the Mossad's failed attack on a Hamas

leader in Amman last fall, prior to His Majesty's talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington later that month, officials say.

But considering the delaying tactics of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Jordan's relations with Israel, although welcomed internationally and especially by the U.S., have increasingly become more of a liability than an asset both at home and in the region.

The Kingdom, home to approximately 1.8 million Palestinian refugees, has also been suffering acute economic hardships.

One of the basic premises of Jordan's peace treaty with the Jewish state was that there would be movement on the Palestinian-Israeli track, an assumption that has been shattered since Mr. Netanyahu came to power in May 1996.

The government is finding it increasingly difficult to convince the population of the merits of a peace process that is becoming more unpopular by the day.

"Either you give people emotional support or material benefits. But lately people have been denied both. The situation is so difficult now and we have very limited strategic options. If it wasn't for Jordanians' personal love for His Majesty, I dread to think what could happen," a seasoned politician recently told the Jordan Times.

Jordan is finding that it can no longer accept Israeli excuses for not implementing its agreements with the



COOLING DOWN: One of New Delhi's ubiquitous monkeys comes face to face with his reflection as he stretches for a drink from a pond in the capital Wednesday. As summer nears its head in the capital, sending temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius, the race to cool down, for humans as well as monkeys, has begun (AFP photo)

Grant and Roberts shoot sequel to 'Four Weddings and a Funeral'

LONDON (AFP) — Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts have begun shooting a follow-up to the box-office smash "Four Weddings and a Funeral." The movie, tentatively entitled "The Notting Hill Project" after the part of London where it's being filmed, is not actually a sequel to the original, according to the tabloid Sun daily. But it will take up the spirit of "Four Weddings," with Roberts playing an American actress who falls in love with Grant as a second-hand bookseller. Roberts is reportedly earning over \$9 million for "The Notting Hill Project." The original comedy starred Grant and Andie MacDowell.

DiCaprio not going to rush into marriage

BONN (AFP) — "Titanic" star Leonardo DiCaprio says he's not going to rush into marriage, telling the German magazine Bunte he wants "20 years of living together" with someone before making her Mrs. DiCaprio. The 23-year-old heart-throb actor said if he did marry, "it would only be if I had already lived with my partner for a long time, about 10 or 20 years." DiCaprio said he was overwhelmed by how nice his legion of admirers were. He said he was surprised they only wanted to "just to talk a little, take a photo, or have an autograph" — unlike fellow stars who get the knife-wielding maniacs.

Loadsamoney is Spice Girls new No.1

LONDON (AFP) — The Spice Girls have got a new number one. It's called loadsamoney. The brash all-girl pop sensations have shot to the top of Britain's money charts, earning a whopping £43 million (\$72 million) last year, according to the Times. That put them well above traditional and proven money-spinners such as the Rolling Stones (a mere £31 million), the Beatles (£26 million) and Elton John (£25 million). In 1996, the Spice Girls managed to earn only £8 million between them.

Dustin Hoffman's adopted daughter guilty of stealing cheques

LONDON (AFP) — Dustin Hoffman's adopted daughter was sentenced Tuesday to 180 hours of community work after pleading guilty to stealing cheques and obtaining money by deception. Karina Hoffman-Birkhead, 32, pleaded guilty to illegally pocketing some \$8,400 in cheques and cash from her employers, a firm in southern England specialising in hiring out caravans to film companies. Hoffman-Birkhead said she had taken the money because of financial problems following a divorce.

Canadians are changing guard at Buckingham Palace

LONDON (R) — They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace — to Canadian soldiers. Where Christopher Robin once went down with Alice, the army said Canadian soldiers will this month mount guard outside Queen Elizabeth's London residence for the first time since her coronation in 1953. Ninety-four men from Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry are visiting Britain for a programme of events that includes the reopening of the refurbished Canadian High Commission. They will mount guard at Buckingham Palace for about a month from April 29.

Crown Prince con

AMMAN (Petra) — Mr. Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Greek President Constantinos Simitis, after the death of King Constantine II, during hours of Thursday of heavy rain at the age of 91.

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King, Ke peace pr

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh

Special to the Jordan Times

BADEN-BADEN — His Majesty King Hussein on Friday met with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and discussed with him the European role in the stalled peace process, the suffering of the Palestinian people and the strained relations between the two countries.

The King stressed Jordan's commitment to achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region and helping the Palestinian brothers in securing their legitimate rights and establishing their own state on their national soil.

King Hussein emphasised the Kingdom's principled stand towards a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region.

The King also called for a review of the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people.

"It is time for seriously doing into consideration sanctions being imposed on the Iraqi people for the last ten years," said the King.

Also during yesterday's meeting with Chancellor Kohl, the King expressed gratitude for Germany's annual assistance to the Kingdom in various sectors. Chancellor Kohl voiced his appreciation to King Hussein's continued efforts for a better understanding among nations on the basis of mutual respect.

Security Council Iraq accuses sanctions,

Combined agency dispatches

U.N. Security Council on Tuesday agreed to hold an informal meeting with two Iraqi envoys that could produce a U.S.-Iraq encounter. Western diplomats said.

The 15 Council members, led by Russia, would have a meeting on Monday with Foreign Minister Mohammed al-Said al-Sahab and Oil Minister Mohammed Amer al-Falid, Western diplomats said.

A U.S. diplomat said it was not known whether U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson would attend the informal session, but he has refused Iraqi requests for direct contacts between U.S. and Iraqi officials.

The meeting is due to take place in the six-month-old U.N. sanctions against Iraq in force since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

A Special Committee on Iraq's approach to adopting a "dual approach" in response to Iraq's disarmament.

A detailed rebuttal of the U.N. report, Iraq Prime Minister Tariq al-Hassani said, was expected to be presented to the Security Council to lift all available sanctions immediately.

Mr. al-Hassani also urged the council to present to the Security Council all available information about Iraq's disarmament.